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ISSUE 94 // November 2025

Celebrating the STARS we love

EXCLUSIVE STAR CHATS **The lost interviews:** Trevor Howard & Victor Mature on life, death and work



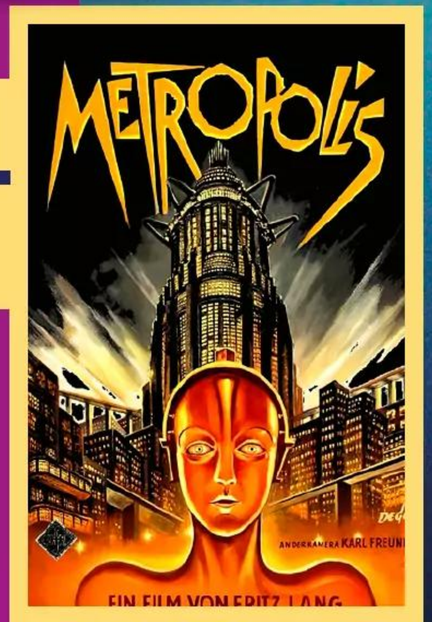


X-RATED HOLLYWOOD

Sizzling classics that defied the censors

THE ORIGINAL SCI-FI FILM

An epic search for Fritz Lang's lost masterpiece





KNIGHTMARE!

Pythons in danger on the Holy Grail set

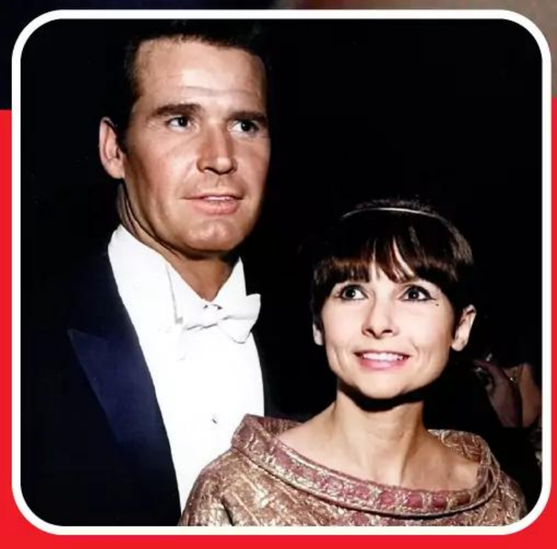
NATALIE WOOD

Her struggle from child star to serious actress

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■ SOPHIA LOREN
A 50-year feud with Gina Lollobrigida



■ JAMES GARNER
Cherished love that lasted a lifetime



■ CORRIE AT 65
The Street's most iconic storylines

HEDDA HOPPER: Poison pen of a gossip queen

Yours RETRO Issue 94

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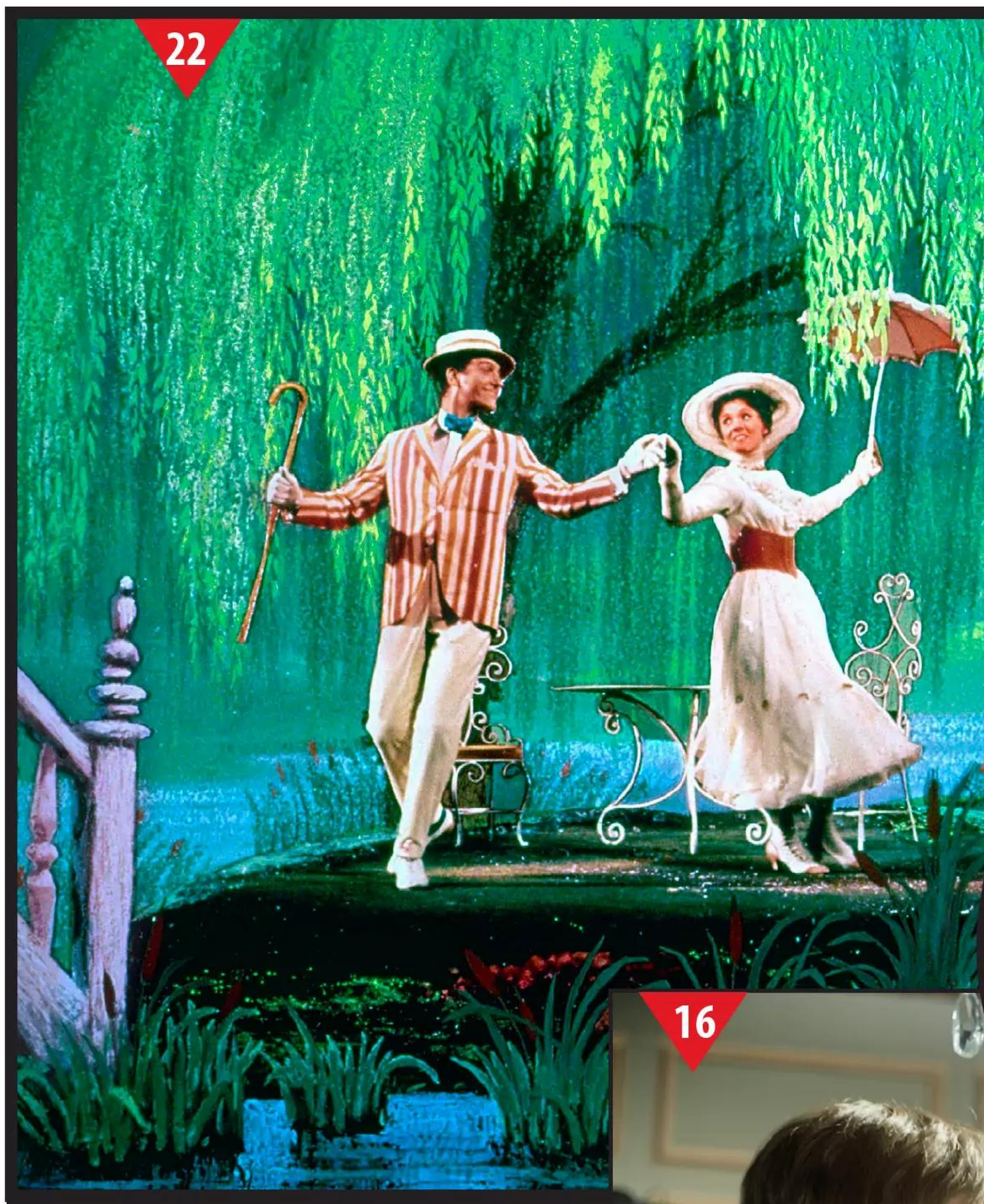
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Hello again...

As this is (almost) the last issue of the year we've added a few festive treats into the mix. Not only is our cover star Natalie Wood (p6) in one of the greatest holiday films of all time, we also have a fascinating look at the life of her Christmassy co-star Edmund Gwenn (p57) and we recall the joy of sitting down on the big day with a family-sized tub of sweets to watch a film premiere on TV (p22).

If you haven't written your Christmas wish list yet and you're stuck for ideas (either for yourself or for someone else) I'd suggest that a **Retro** subscription would make a thoughtful and affordable choice at just £19.99 for 6 issues. Visit greatmagazines.co.uk/christmas-gifts to find out more.



See you next issue

Sharon **Sharon** EDITOR

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Seven scenes ...with lions

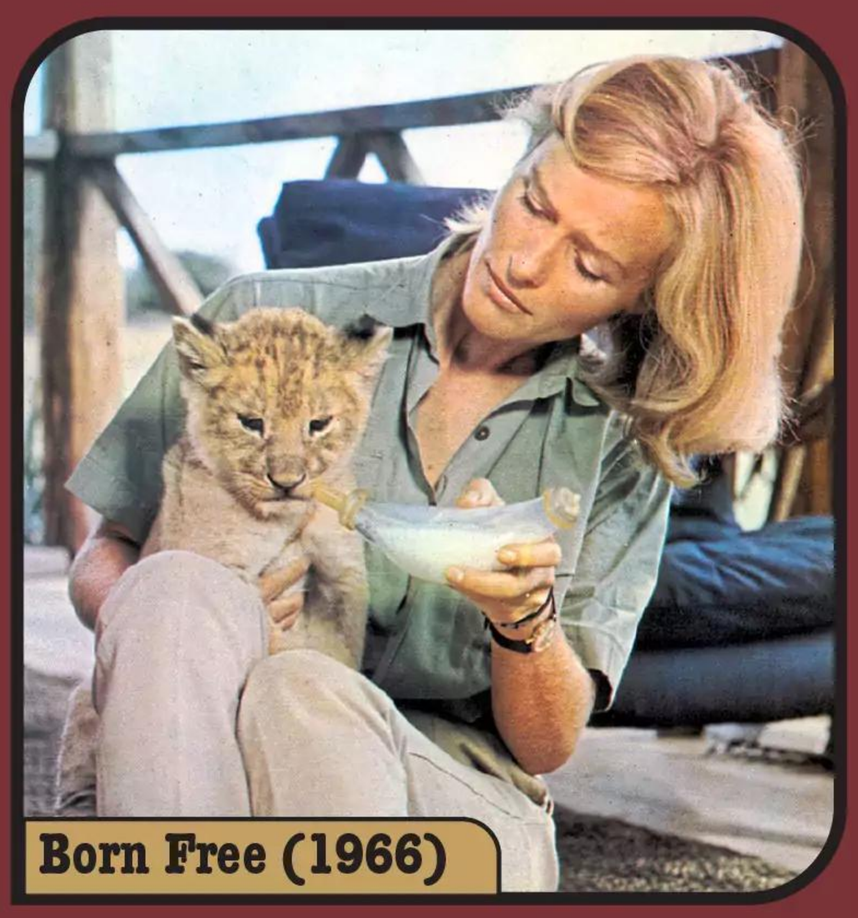
As fearsome predators or noble kings, lions have captivated us for decades and claimed their place in countless unforgettable films



Napoleon and Samantha (1972)

Jodie Foster's feature film debut sees her and Napoleon (Johnny Whitaker) travel across America with an ex-circus lion. The lion was played by Zamba, who had 27 acting credits including Tarzan (1966).

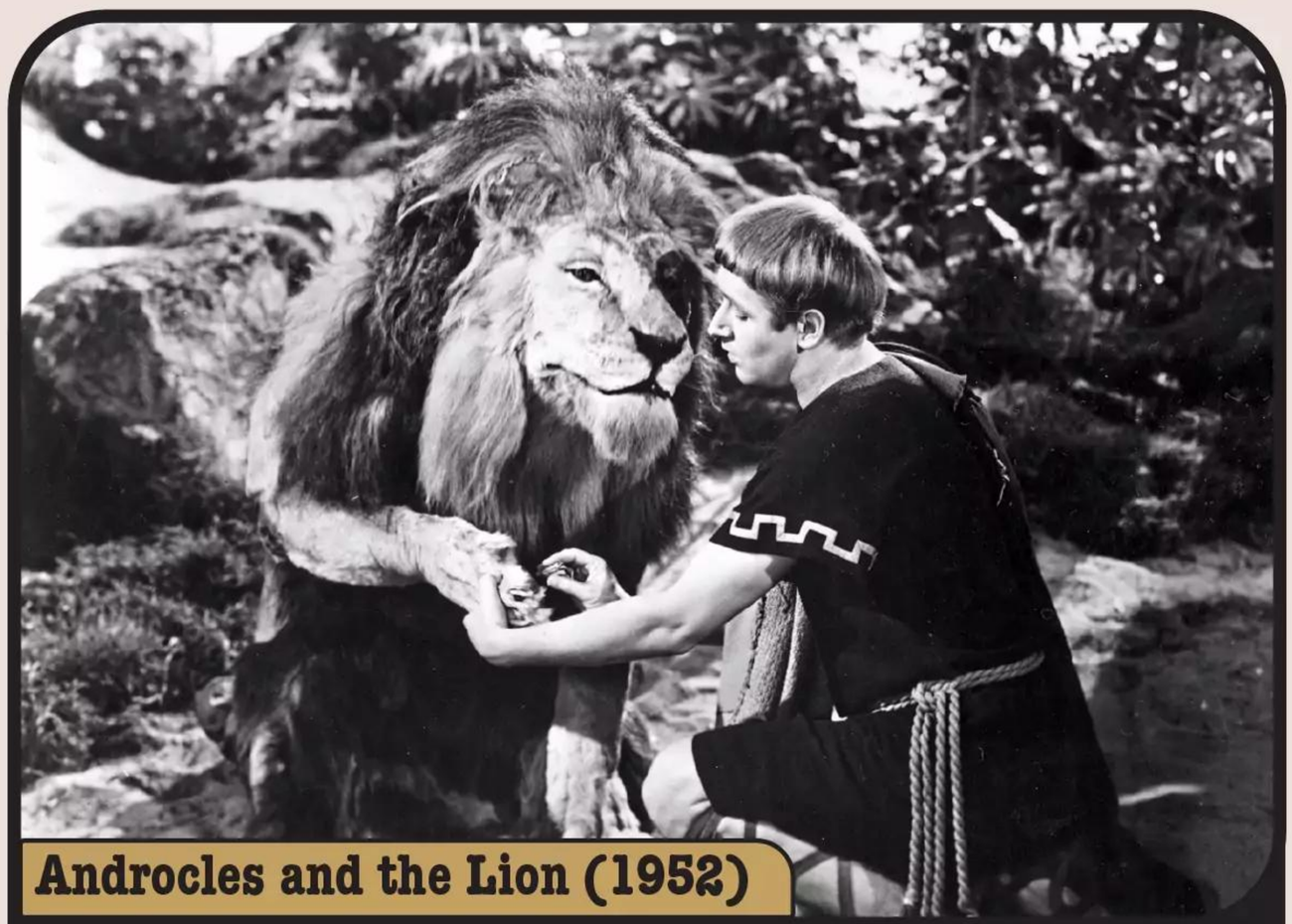
RETRO says: The cast includes both Ellen Corby and Will Geer, who went on to play Grandma and Grandpa in The Waltons (1972-81).



Born Free (1966)

Real-life couple Virginia McKenna and Bill Travers tell the true story of George and Joy Adamson's time in Kenya when they adopted an orphaned lion cub, whom they named Elsa.

RETRO says: McKenna was injured during filming. She broke her ankle when a lion knocked her over, then another of the cubs bit her shoulder.



Androcles and the Lion (1952)

Alan Young, best known as Mister Ed's long-suffering human pal Wilbur, befriends another, more dangerous, animal in this comic retelling of a classical fable. It was also the first of four films to pair Victor Mature and Jean Simmons.

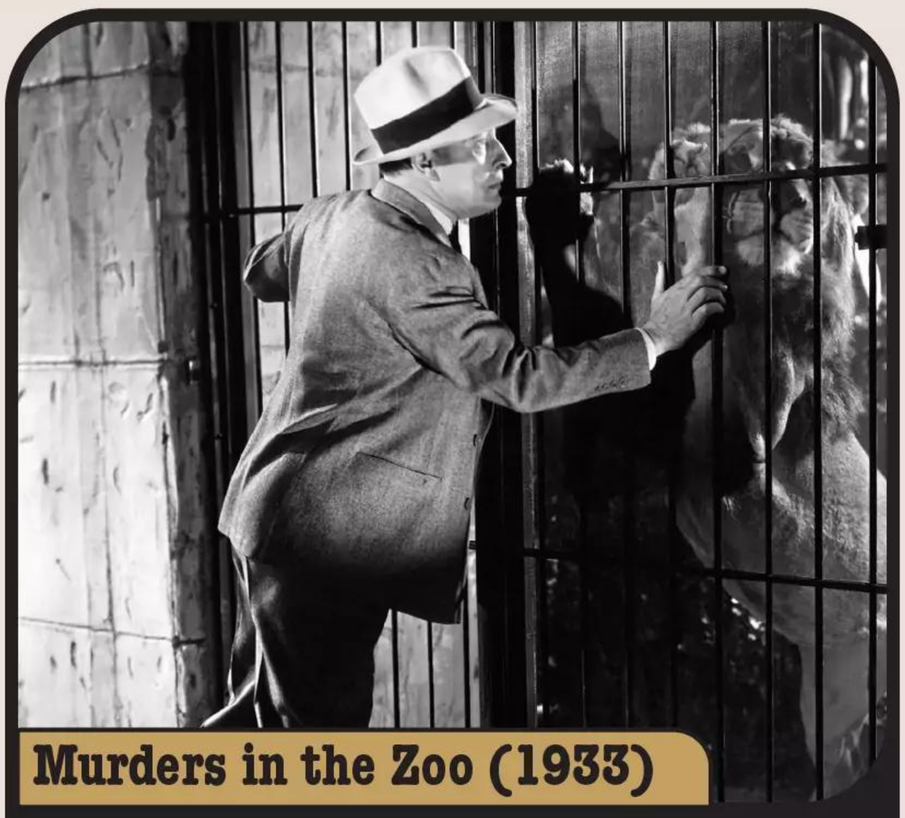
RETRO says: The film was remade in 1967 with Norman Wisdom as Androcles and Noël Coward as Caesar.



Clarence, the Cross-eyed Lion (1965)

When Paula (Cheryl Miller) and her father, Dr Tracy (Marshall Thompson), find a wild lion with eyesight problems, they adopt him as a member of the family. This comedy-adventure film became the basis for the popular TV series Daktari (1966-69).

RETRO says: Clarence was dubbed 'the Shirley Temple of the lion world' for his golden mane and sweet temperament.



Murders in the Zoo (1933)

A particularly dark and grisly pre-code horror sees Lionel Atwill as a zoologist and big-game hunter who is insanely jealous of his wife's lovers and uses animals to help dispose of them.

RETRO says: A puma was injured during filming when 17 of the big cats decided to have a fight.



Roar (1981)

Director Noel Marshall and his wife Tippi Hedren spent five years and around $17 million making this film. 72 people, including the couple's children, were injured during the production of what's been described as 'the most dangerous film ever made'.

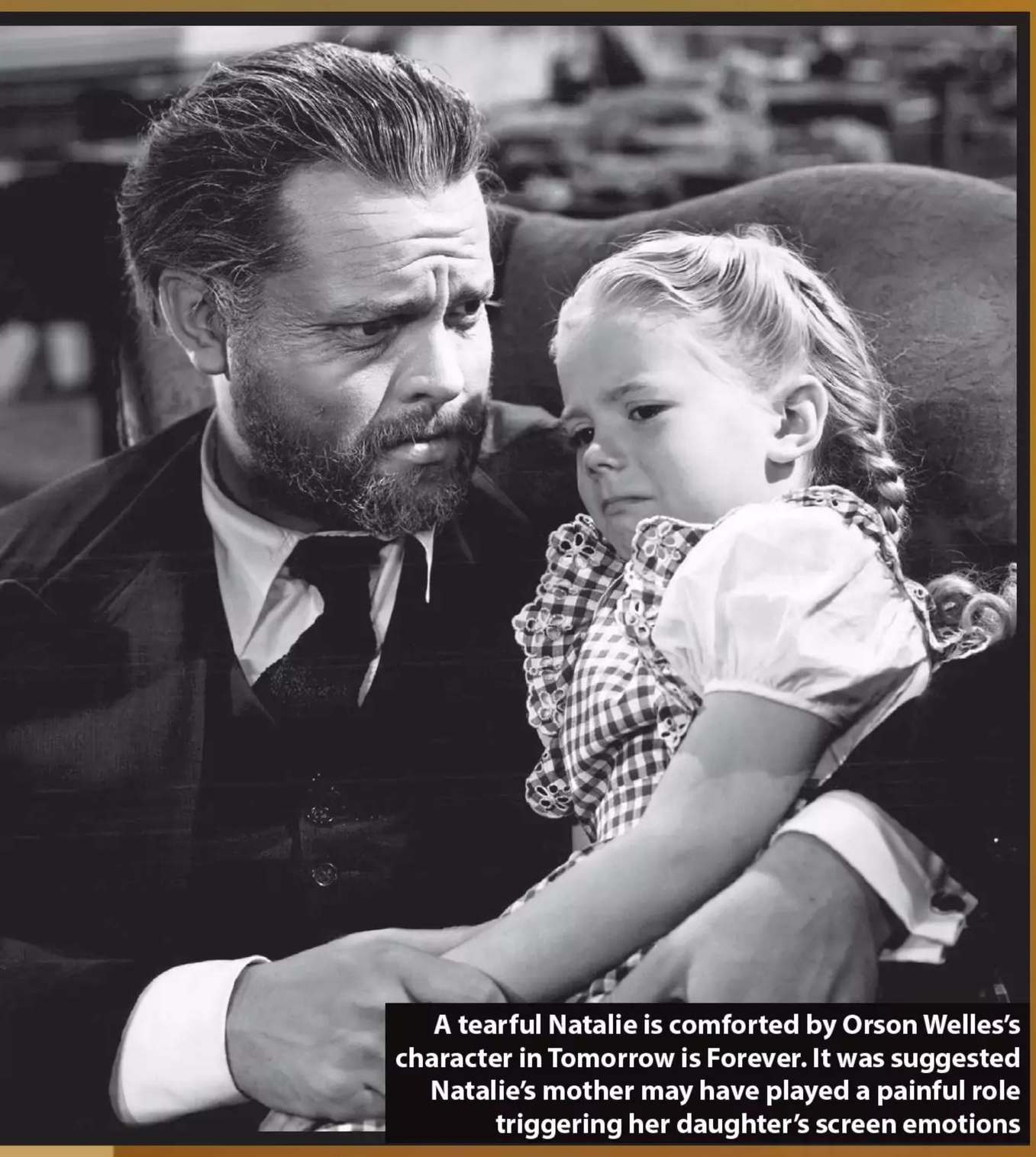
RETRO says: Tippi Hedren later founded the Shambala Preserve, a sanctuary for exotic big cats.



The Wizard of Oz (1939)

Lions don't get much more iconic than Dorothy's travelling companion. Bert Lahr was the man who brought the Cowardly Lion to life wearing a suit that weighed over 90lb.

RETRO says: When Judy Garland had to slap the lion she couldn't stop laughing.



A tearful Natalie is comforted by Orson Welles's character in Tomorrow is Forever. It was suggested Natalie's mother may have played a painful role triggering her daughter's screen emotions

It's often said that fact is stranger than fiction, and the trajectory of Natalie Wood's extraordinary life certainly dwarfs her many film roles. The circumstances of her mysterious death from drowning in 1981 often overshadow her career, unjust once one realises how hard she fought to establish herself as a credible actress. Husband Robert Wagner (whom she twice married) said screen stardom was Natalie's inevitable destiny, as synonymous with her identity 'as if she had the word movie star written on her birth certificate'.

Why was this? The daughter of Russian immigrants, she was born Natalia Zakharenko (changed to Gurdin) in San Francisco on 20 July 1938. Father Nick was gentle but unhappily transformed by drink, her mother Maria a fervent filmgoer. Natalie Wood's eldest daughter Natasha says, 'My grandmother was incredibly superstitious... twirling and swirling with fantastical stories,' many indelibly planted within Natalie's impressionable mind. Maria cherished a gypsy's prophecy that her daughter would become a world-famous actress, indoctrinating her with a belief in stardom and modelling Natalie's ➔

Natalie Wood... A MAGNIFICE

One of the few stars to successfully bridge the gulf between child and adult stardom, Natalie Wood was also one of the brightest... her courage and passion for her craft forging a legendary career, as Amanda Hodges discovers

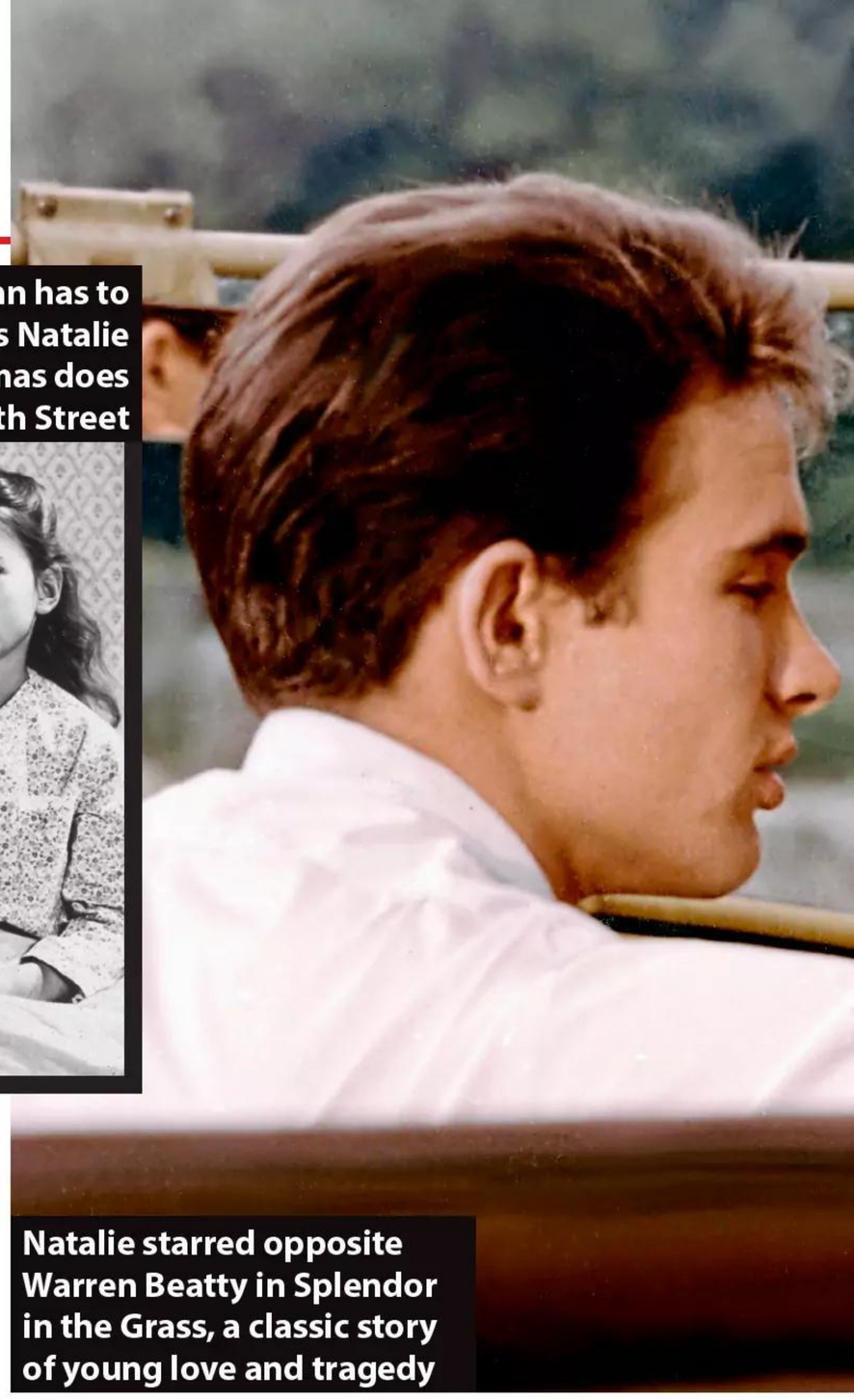
DID YOU KNOW?

Natalie's mother imbued her daughter with many fears and she struggled for years to be left alone at night; the most pervasive issue though was her ingrained fear of dark water.

NT MIRACLE



Edmund Gwenn has to convince a suspicious Natalie that Father Christmas does exist in Miracle on 34th Street



Natalie starred opposite Warren Beatty in Splendor in the Grass, a classic story of young love and tragedy

look on fellow child star, Margaret O'Brien.

By the time Natalie was four, the family had moved to Santa Rosa. A movie company needed a child to drop an ice-cream cone and, encouraged by her mother, Natalie clinched the uncredited part, making her film debut (Happy Land, 1943) shortly before her fifth birthday. 'It was more than cute curls that impressed director Irving Pichel – it was her extraordinarily high intelligence,' biographer Manoah Bowman notes.

'He remembered me later when doing Tomorrow is Forever (1946),' Natalie recalled. Professionally known as Natalie Wood and now based in LA, she was persuasive as the German girl adopted by Orson Welles's character. Allegedly, when unable to cry on cue, her mother privately tortured a butterfly, provoking a torrent of tears from Natalie. So much speculation surrounds Maria it's hard to verify the facts, but it's entirely credible.

Welles retained fond memories of this picture. 'I was her first leading man and for six takes kept blowing my lines. Not Natalie. She was already a perfect little pro!' His assessment that 'Natalie doesn't act from the script, she acts from the heart,' proved prescient for her adult career, her best pictures invariably those where she reacted intuitively to the story. 'The times I've done something I didn't respond to emotionally, it's generally not worked out well,' Natalie would acknowledge.

Christmas classic Miracle on 34th Street (1947) transformed her into a bona fide child star, acclaimed by screen mother Maureen O'Hara as, 'the finest, most professional young actress in the picture business'. Timing was good, the post-war world offering a profusion of family films allowing Natalie's talents to shine. She became an inveterate people-pleaser, aware of being the family breadwinner. 'Getting jobs became a tremendous responsibility. Sometimes I had nightmares about the family starving if I didn't act.'

SHINING EXAMPLE

She was a well-groomed example of the Hollywood studio system... hard-working and appreciative with impeccable manners. Fortunately, by all accounts, Natalie remained unspoilt, a warm, vivacious child who loved playing make-believe. 'I was so young and making movies, going to the studio every morning at dawn, was magic!' The darker side of her childhood dreams only surfaced later.

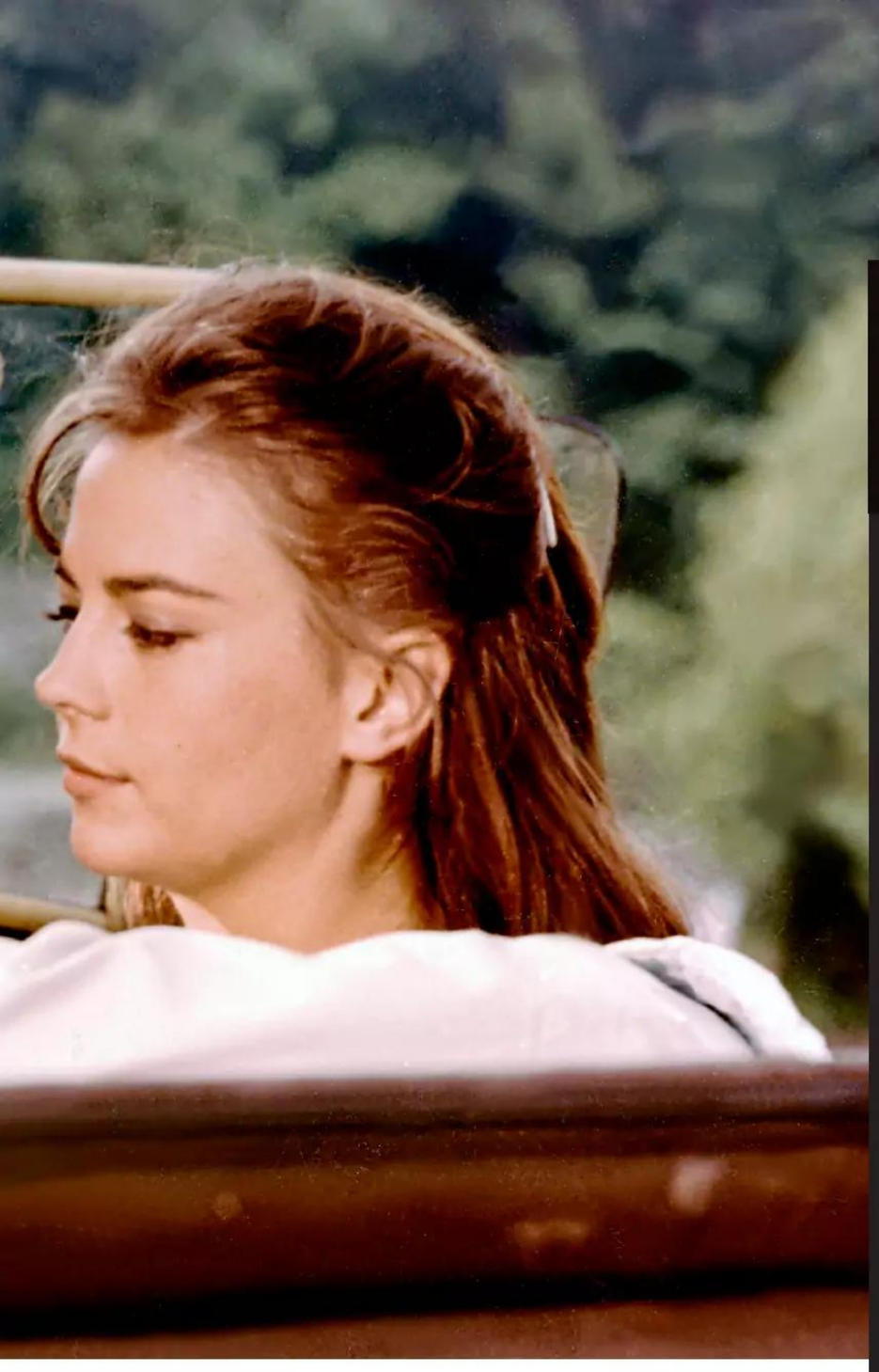
Petite (at 5ft 2in), delicate but spirited, by the time Natalie reached 16, life was changing. She was weary of playing sweet little girls. When Nicholas Ray's

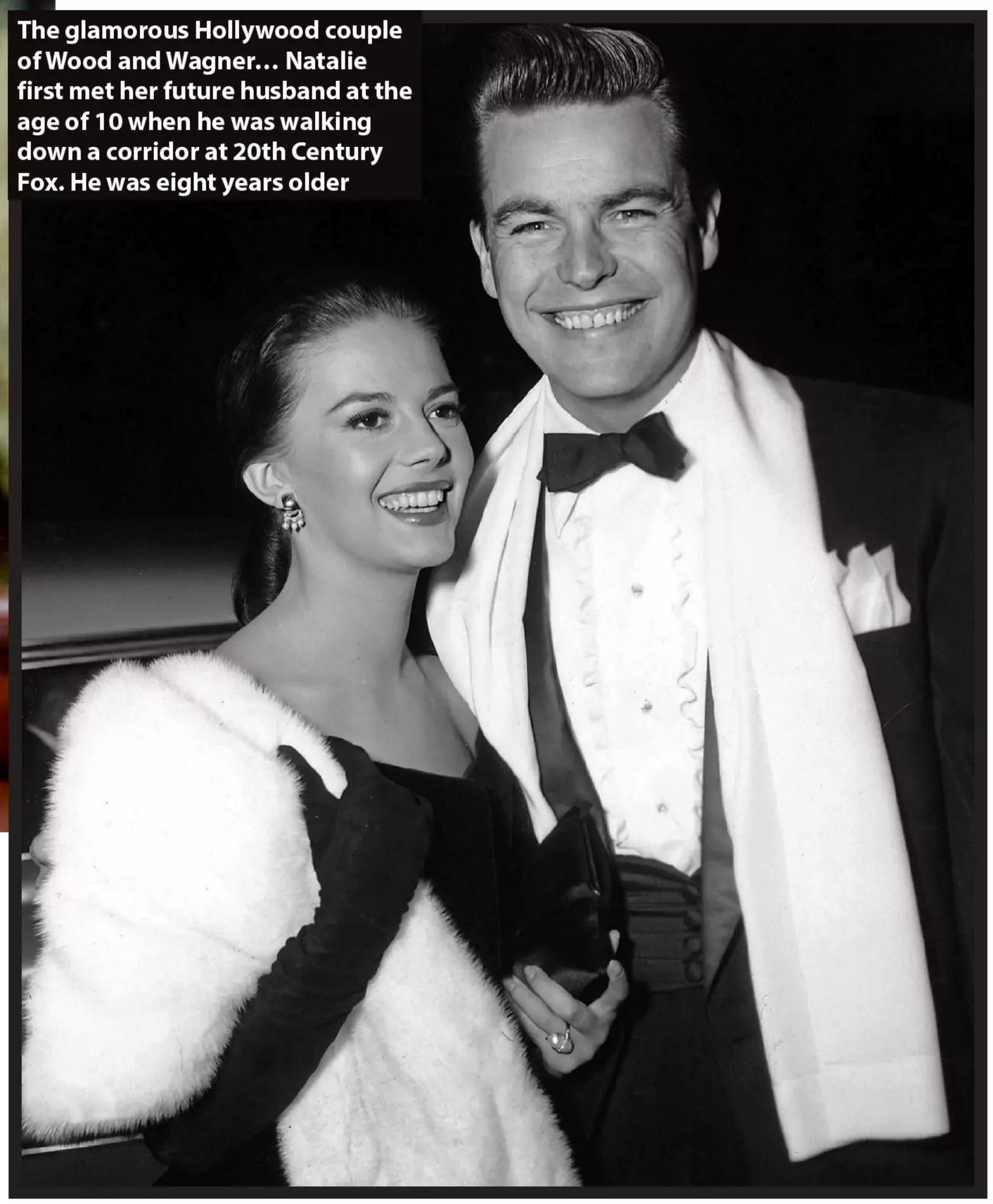
A journey of self-discovery

A pivotal year in Natalie's life was 1966 as she broke free of the Studios, prioritising wellbeing and mental health. In notes from an (unpublished) magazine article, she wrote candidly about the gulf between her image and true self. 'It's strange to see people watching you in a film. And brings with it a barrage of mixed feelings... that part of me is public property. But there's a private person behind the image. Her name is Natasha Gurdin. I'd been on a merry-go-round since I was four, reappraisal was long overdue. Looking from the outside it must appear a pleasant way to make a living... playing at make-believe. But from an insider's perspective, this is a hotly competitive business, particularly hard on women. Your ego's on the line, every mood and inch scrutinised. Part of the bargain is being exploited, misunderstood and occasionally misled.'

In order to reclaim her identity, Natalie began intensive therapy and pronounced it deeply cathartic.







The glamorous Hollywood couple of Wood and Wagner… Natalie first met her future husband at the age of 10 when he was walking down a corridor at 20th Century Fox. He was eight years older

explosive script about troubled youth, Rebel Without a Cause (1955), first materialised, Natalie asserted herself. 'It was a very important film for me because until then I'd worked as a child and done as I was told. When my parents read this they said, 'Oh no', as it showed parents in an unsympathetic light, but I read it and, for the first time, said I have to do this! I loved Judy and very much felt an identification with the part.'

Natalie had previously met co-star, charismatic James Dean, in television drama I'm a Fool (1954), and was immediately drawn to his creative energy. 'He was already something of a legend among young actors: exotic, eccentric and attractive.' Significantly, recalls friend Mart Crowley, this was the moment ambition and destiny coalesced. 'I think she didn't really decide she wanted to be an actress until Rebel and then it was clear she wasn't just being pushed by her mother.' Natalie wryly said, 'Everyone thought I was too young even though I was exactly the right age!' She persisted, 'I tested a number of times. I also had a car accident and, rather than telling my parents, told them to call the director as a policeman had called me a juvenile delinquent so that must mean I've the part!' She did and it delivered her first Oscar nomination for Best Supporting Actress.

Given a seven-year contract at Warner Brothers, Natalie escaped the parental yoke and began enjoying teenage life, inevitably perhaps, going a little wild, yet always immaculately dressed, courtesy of her mother's insistence on glamour. This pivotal gear change moved her from innocent roles into more nuanced adult fare, but the ensuing years proved artistically frustrating. With the exception of John Ford's majestic Western The Searchers (1956), she found herself in a string of mediocre or bland girlfriend roles, nothing testing her dramatic mettle. So Natalie took decisive action and complained vociferously.

RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Her daughter Natasha reflects, 'She was owned by the studios but wanted choice, so she took on Jack Warner at only 20 and told him I'm going on strike because I don't like the roles you're choosing.'

Given an 18-month suspension, Natalie, who'd recently married childhood crush Robert Wagner, maximised the enforced leisure time, taking rare relaxation from a hectic schedule. Her tenacity was duly vindicated. 'I wasn't trying to get more money,' recalled Natalie, 'but what I eventually did get was the right to have one picture a year of my own choice,' ➤

DID YOU KNOW?

Wood received three Academy Award nominations before the age of 25 for Rebel Without a Cause, Splendor in the Grass, and Love with the Proper Stranger. It was an achievement not equalled until Jennifer Lawrence in 2013.



A coming-of-age film for the 16-year-old Natalie. Rebel Without a Cause was a teenage sensation

a turning point for the direction of future work.

The first opportunity was West Side Story (1961) which marked a crucial step of independence. Insecure about dancing and singing, she embraced the chance to perform her own songs, but was intensely frustrated to find her voice dubbed by Marni Nixon in post-production. Despite this hiccup, West Side Story was a huge critical and commercial success, bringing her a second Oscar nomination. The film was enhanced by the emotional depth she brought to Maria's character and offered real significance for Natalie's career, marking the transition from teenage star to beloved leading lady.

Always torn between twin impulses to uphold the ethos of Hollywood stardom as instilled by her mother, and her own instinctive desire to be a serious actress, Natalie's role as Deanie Loomis in Elia Kazan's melodrama Splendor in the Grass (1961) was one of her most memorable. 'When I get a new role, I go a little crazy. I try to learn everything I can about the character and the world they live in,' she'd say. She cherished it as one of her richest performances, co-starring opposite Warren Beatty in his screen debut.

'When the persona fit the character,' said Kazan, 'you couldn't do better.' Natalie was at her best in highly charged, emotional roles; parts that required strength and innate vulnerability. Husband Robert Wagner recalled that during this time, 'her career started to catch fire, it was like striking a match. Splendor was a dream come true.. Natalie concurred. 'The opportunity to work with Kazan was fantastic, but emotionally it was very demanding,' forcing her to confront her own demons, the volatile mother-daughter relationship appearing as a recurrent theme in many of her films.

In Gypsy (1962) where Natalie plays real-life burlesque artist Gypsy Rose Lee, daughter Natasha recalls, 'I see both sides of her personality. The regular person backstage and the charismatic entertainer on stage. In a split second, she could switch from being Mom to a glamorous movie star. She could be intimate and cosy... Then suddenly the cameras would click and she was Natalie Wood, the ravishing beauty with the dark, soulful eyes.'



The role of Gypsy Rose Lee showcased Natalie's charismatic star qualities

POWER PEAK

The early Sixties witnessed Natalie at her professional peak. Long-time friend Mia Farrow described her as 'smart and incredibly well organised. In a town where women

A final tribute

At the time of Natalie's untimely death in late 1981 she was taking a break from filming her comeback picture Brainstorm (1983), memorable for a haunting early score by James Horner, who'd later compose music for films including Titanic (1997). Her co-star was actor Christopher Walken, a guest on the ill-fated boating weekend. After a screen hiatus, Natalie had been keen to try something different and Brainstorm offered this, blending sci-fi and romance. Its unusual plot experimented with the idea of virtual reality, decades before the topic became mainstream. Most of Natalie's scenes had been completed so, with resourceful editing and sister Lana Wood doubling for her in long shots, the film was finished. Director Douglas Trumbull had initially been encouraged to ditch the project after the tragedy, but he insisted it be released as a tribute to Natalie, dedicated to her memory.



Actor Christopher Walken was a guest on the boat trip the night Natalie disappeared



weren't always respected, not in their work and not socially, she was an exception.' Now an established star with considerable power (such as script and co-star approval – unusual at the time for an actress), Natalie could choose projects like delightfully offbeat Love with the Proper Stranger (1963) opposite Steve McQueen, and the underrated, This Property is Condemned (1966) with Robert Redford. She'd kickstarted the latter's screen career by choosing him as her co-star for Inside Daisy Clover (1965) and he'd say appreciatively, 'she was just trying to be a regular human being, against the odds of being treated like a movie star and she did it beautifully.' Robert Mulligan, her Love with the Proper Stranger director, noticed her resolve to hone her craft. 'She had a quiet determination to grow as an actress. No declarations. It was just there.'

Natalie had long admired Vivien Leigh and, when offered the part of Alva Starr, a Tennessee Williams heroine, in This Property is Condemned, 'the hardest role I've ever done', she seized the chance, declaring it, 'the nearest I'll ever get to playing Blanche DuBois'. Frustratingly this film and several others didn't fare well commercially and by 1966 Natalie was feeling burnt-out. Change beckoned. She bought out her studio contract, attended counselling and embraced a career hiatus, choosing to take literature classes at UCLA rather than star in Bonnie and Clyde (1967) or Barefoot in the Park (1967). When she returned it was in smash hit sex comedy Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice (1969), with Natalie shrewdly negotiating a percentage of the profits rather than any salary.

A BALANCED LIFE

Now a mother, she had fresh priorities and subsequently chose only a handful of films – a role in The Towering Inferno (1974) was declined as uninspiring and she was passed over for both Ordinary People (1980) and Sophie's Choice (1982), roles she'd keenly sought. Like many, before that fateful night in November 1981, Natalie was searching for a balanced life, television rather than film offering richer opportunities in her 40s.

But she achieved so much in her lifetime, eschewing conventional ingénue roles in favour of more complex parts and single-mindedly navigating the notorious shores of Hollywood, committed to forging her own path. In her four decades as a star, her career was enviably broad in scope and, as daughter Natasha emphatically concludes, 'My mother was not a tragic, doomed person. She was vibrant. Her life was devoted to her art, her children, her husband and her heart. This is how she'd want to be remembered, not as someone defined by her death, but by her life.'

I know the face...

ARTRO MORRIS



Born: 17 May 1926, Liverpool
Died: 11 February 2014, Gwynedd, Wales
Screen debut: The Riddle of the Red Wolf (1958)
Screen credits: Over 110
Best known for: A popular, versatile and dependable British character actor, Artro was equally at home in period dramas, thrillers or comedy and a regular on our TV screens throughout the Sixties, Seventies and Eighties. He appeared in popular series such as The Avengers (1961), Z Cars (1962-76), Lorna Doone (1976), The Gentle Touch (1980) and Minder (1984).

He made several appearances on Emmerdale Farm (1974-75) as William Hatherwick, an artist who painted a mural at The Woolpack.

His film repertoire included Dracula A.D. 1972 (1972), The Thirty Nine Steps (1978), Oliver Twist (1982) and The Corn is Green (1979) opposite Katherine Hepburn.

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LETTERS+OPINIONS+DILEMMAS



HOW TO JOIN US IN THE RETRO CHAT...

By POST: Retro Magazine, Bauer Media Publishing UK, The Lantern, 75 Hampstead Road, London NW1 2PL

By EMAIL: Yoursretro@bauermedia.co.uk
By PHONE: 01733 468000

I wanted to ask if you could write about the TV series Hogan's Heroes. It's a great show set in a POW camp.

J Bellman

Retro says: You're in luck! We have a feature planned in **Retro** 96.

AUCTION WATCH

A selection of costumes, props and memorabilia from the TV series Batman (1966-68) sold at auction last month. The big money went to a pair of costumes worn by the stars, Adam West and Burt Ward, achieving an incredible $575,000 (£438,471)! In the same sale, Cesar Romero's Joker ensemble sold for $212,500 (£162,043), Julie Newmar's Catwoman costume fetched $68,750 (£54,425) and Yvonne Craig's Batgirl suit was snapped up for $87,500 (£66,723).



CATCH IT NOW



Travel back in time to enjoy a world of sunshine and laughter with Eric and Ern – a live show that perfectly captures the exceptional comedy magic of Morecambe and Wise. Ian Ashpitel and Jonty Stephens present a superb homage to Britain's beloved comedians

Packed full of the duo's best-loved songs and sketches and, of course a musical guest, this wonderful show evokes memories of times when whole families would huddle around the telly to watch those fantastic Christmas specials.

Showing 6-18 January 2026 at Curve, Leicester. Visit curveonline.co.uk or call 0116 242 3595.

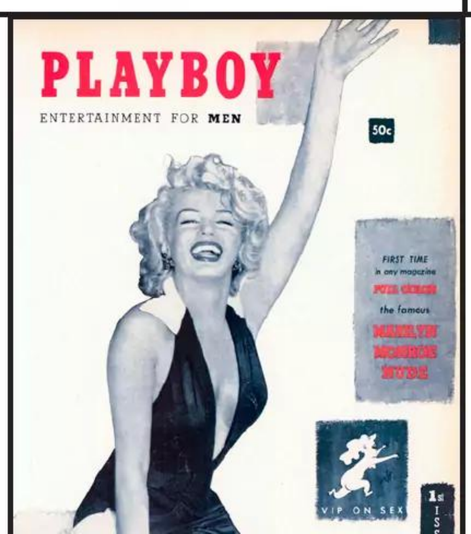
Thank you for the recent piece on David Soul (**Retro** 92). Being a woman in my early 50s I remember watching Starsky and Hutch every week and it has brought back so many memories of childhood. I always wanted my mum to knit me a Starsky cardigan, but sadly never received one. I have even recently reignited my passion for the show by purchasing the full box set of DVDs to revisit every episode. In my opinion, Starsky and Hutch is the best cop show of all time. I also grew up listening to David Soul's music, as my mum was a big fan.

Kathryn Vaughan, South Wales



72 years ago... 1 December 1953

Hugh Hefner published the first edition of Playboy magazine. The issue, featuring Marilyn Monroe as the centrefold, sold out in a matter of weeks.





■ In a recent Reel Location column (**Retro** 92), Georgina Butters asked to know more about the Mouth of Truth scene in 1953's Roman Holiday. I wanted to add that director, William Wyler and Gregory Peck, who was newsman Joe Bradley, played a joke on Audrey Hepburn (Princess Ann). They hadn't told her Peck would make it look as if his hand was bitten off, so Hepburn's shocked reaction was real.
Paul Roper

■ Last month you asked for recommendations of overlooked films. I wanted to mention two of my favourites; The Warriors (1979) starring Michael Beck is about rival New York gangs; and romantic drama, Perfect (1985) staring Jamie Lee Curtis and John Travolta – worth it for the soundtrack alone.
David Goldsmith

■ A selection of little-remembered films I recommend include What a Crazy World (1963) with Joe Brown as an aspiring musician; two David Essex vehicles, That'll Be the Day (1973) and Stardust (1974); and Billy Wilder's 1974 version of The Front Page with Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau.
Mark Taha



■ I was pleased to see a mention of Michael Holliday in a recent issue (**Retro** 86). He died far too young, aged only 38, but I was lucky enough to see him perform live once in Wolverhampton. He modelled his singing style on his hero Bing Crosby.
Geoff Green

■ If I'm ever asked my favourite TV show, I have to say M.A.S.H with the great Alan Alda. All the cast were excellent actors. Can you please feature this?
Margaret Clements
Retro says: *We love it too Margaret so I'm sure we will give it a mention.*

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...?



I used to love to see an actor called Pat Conway – he was my teenage crush. Please can you tell me what happened to him?
Rita Gray

Born 9 January 1931, Patrick Conway was best known for his starring role as Sheriff Clay Hollister on the Western TV series Tombstone Territory (1957-60). The son of MGM director Jack Conway and grandson of silent film legend Francis X Bushman, Pat grew up riding horses and working cattle on his father's Pacific Palisades ranch. After studying acting at the Pasadena Playhouse and London's Old Vic, he served in the US Marine Corps before launching his screen career. Following early film roles, Conway became a Western TV regular, with appearances on Gunsmoke, Rawhide, and Bonanza, and roles in Laramie (1961), Geronimo (1962) and Brighty of the Grand Canyon (1966). He died of renal failure aged just 50 on 24 April 1981.

Retro says:
Is there a little-known star you'd like us to find out more about? Write to ask us to find out what happened to your favourites.



57 years ago... 3 December 1968

Elvis Presley's Comeback Special aired on NBC. It was the King's first live performance in seven years, and successfully relaunched his singing career.

You've got MORE MAIL



■ I was very sorry to hear that actress Claudia Cardinale died, aged 87. One of Italy's most famous actresses, she led an extraordinary life. She was born in Tunis, North Africa and, in 1957 won the title of 'The Most Beautiful Italian Girl in Tunisia'. This led to several film offers but, soon afterwards, she discovered she was pregnant. Her son Patrick was born in England in 1958, although for many years he was thought to be Claudia's younger brother. Cardinale's international breakthrough came with The Pink Panther (1963), and she became a sought-after star in both Italy and Hollywood. She later partnered professionally and personally with director Pasquale Squitieri, with whom she had a daughter. Claudia received more than 40 awards for her work, most notably for Claretta (1984). Beyond film, she worked as a political activist and UNESCO ambassador for women's rights. Her impressive career spanned 128 screen appearances, ending with her final role in The Island of Forgiveness (2022), at the age of 84.
John Rutherford

REEL LOCATION





■ I've always wondered where they filmed On Her Majesty's Secret Service (1969), particularly Blofeld's mountain-top hideout. Is it real or was it a set?
Ed Parker
Retro says: *To stop Ernst Stavro Blofeld (Telly Savalas) holding the world to ransom Bond (George Lazenby) travels undercover, as Sir Hilary Bray, to Blofeld's research institute in the Swiss Alps.*

The Piz Gloria is a revolving restaurant at the summit of the Schilthorn in Switzerland. It was only partially constructed when the Bond team came across it while scouting for locations in the region and, thinking it was a perfect fit for the description in Ian Fleming's novel, they co-funded its completion in exchange for exclusive use for filming. The restaurant owners are proud of the association and the lower floor houses a James Bond exhibition containing memorabilia and film clips.

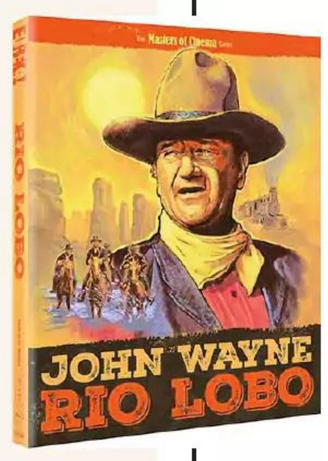
OUT NOW...

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WATCH ON BLU-RAY



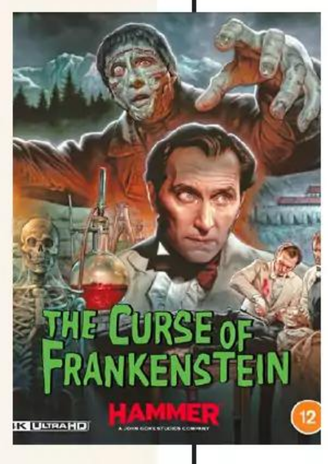
Howard Hawks's final film, Rio Lobo, is out now on Blu-Ray. This classic tale of courage, betrayal and redemption sees John Wayne as Union Army Colonel Cord McNally, whose close friend is killed by a group of Confederates, setting in motion a quest for revenge that will continue even after the Civil War is over. RRP £17.99

BUY THE BOOK



Stephen Rebello's Criss-Cross offers a gripping behind-the-scenes look at the creation of Hitchcock's Strangers on a Train. Immersive and meticulously researched, the book explores the film's turbulent production, artistic risks, and controversial themes against the backdrop of Fifties Hollywood's political and social climate. RRP £24.98

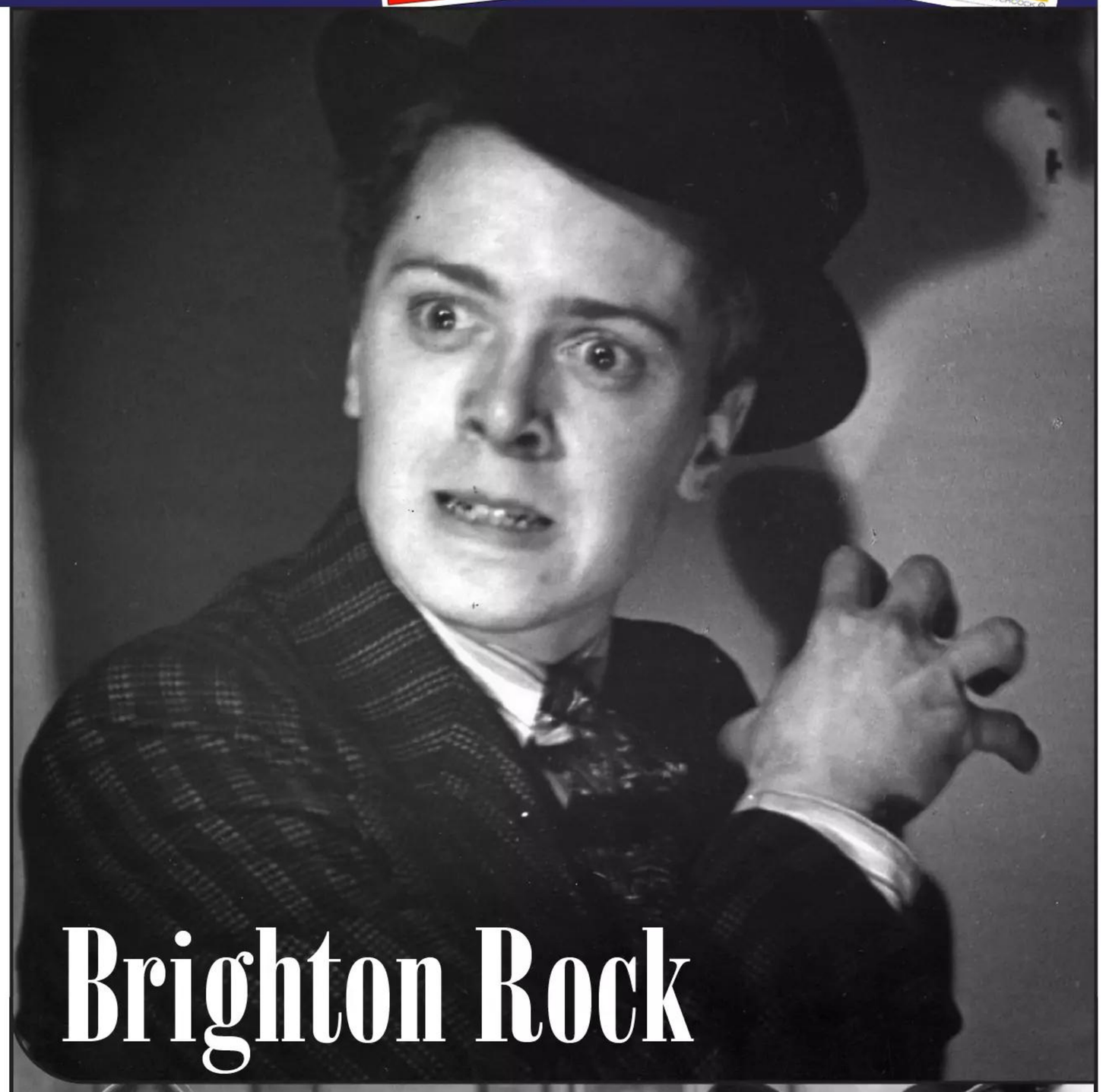
WATCH ON BLU-RAY



After years of intense scientific study, Victor Frankenstein decides that he must build the perfect human being – from body parts! A cinema sensation, The Curse of Frankenstein (1957) single-handedly revived the horror genre and turned Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee into cinema legends. Now painstakingly restored, this British classic makes its worldwide debut on 4K UHD. RRP £29.99

CATCH UP WITH A CLASSIC FILM





Brighton Rock

What you want me to say is 'I love you'. Here's the truth: I hate you… You make me sick.'

When the Boulting brothers proposed filming their latest movie on location in Brighton, the town's borough council was none too keen. Adapted from Graham Greene's sensational 1938 novel, the narrative follows the exploits of a sociopathic young gang leader named Pinkie Brown. The opening credits sequence baldly stated, 'In the years between the two wars, behind the Regency terraces and crowded beaches, there was another Brighton of dark alleyways and festering slums.'

As a concession to the tourism-conscious local authorities, the finished film prefaced this with a disclaimer saying, 'Brighton today is a large, jolly, friendly seaside town in Sussex'. But, dress it up as they might, the makers could hardly conceal the seedy nature of the story's characters and plot. After all, the movie was retitled Young Scarface for its US release and, on this side of the pond, was dismissed in the Daily Mirror as 'false, cheap, nasty sensationalism… This film should not be shown.'

There had been talk of access being denied to some pivotal locations, such as the racecourse – the scene of a vicious gang fight with cut-throat razors that prefigures similar scraps in the TV series Peaky Blinders (2013-22). The filmmakers prevailed, but to minimise the amount of co-operation necessary, director John Boulting shot much of the footage in the town with hidden cameras. This had the side effect of giving scenes an air of realism and immediacy, which is demonstrated most clearly as the hapless reporter Fred Hale is pursued by Pinkie and his murderous henchmen.

The character of Pinkie was played by 23-year-old Richard Attenborough. Initially, Greene didn't approve ('the lad doesn't look evil enough') but later apologised for his misjudgment and sent a letter to the actor praising his performance. The author was right to do so – Attenborough's Pinkie is unfathomably cruel, grotesquely puritanical and, like the writing in the titular confectionery, the same all the way through.



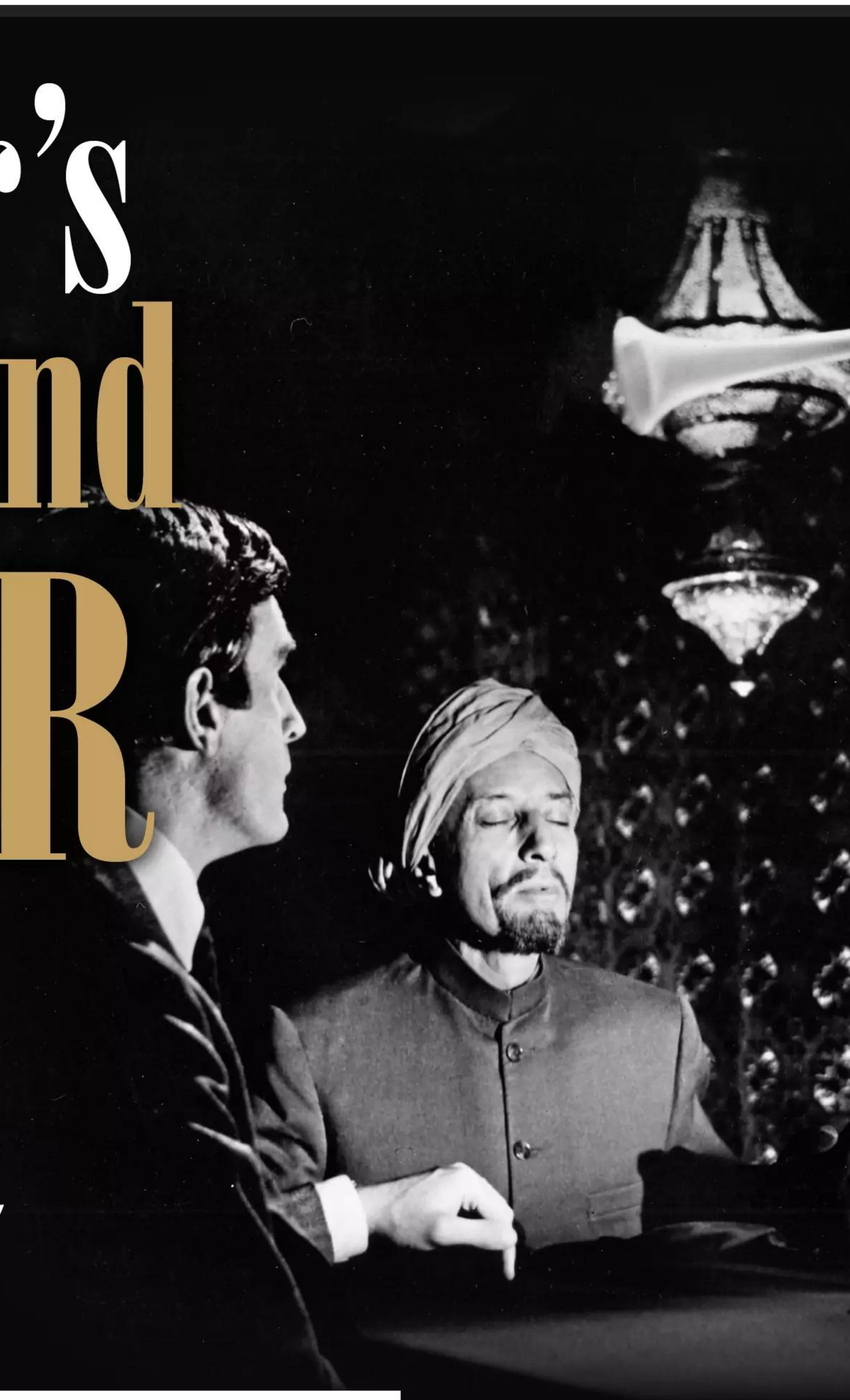
Attenborough with William Hartnell (Dallow), Nigel Stock (Cubitt) and Alan Wheatley (Fred Hale)

Seaside homicide: Richard Attenborough as the sociopathic Pinkie Brown

Saturday 29 November at 2.15pm on Talking Pictures TV

BY JON GOWER

Hammer's fairground of FEAR



JD Savage recalls when America's ABC network attempted to blend the cool edge of late Sixties swinging Britain with the chilling suspense of its top horror studio, Hammer. The result, Journey to the Unknown, was a fascinating yet neglected, star-packed series that plunged into paranoia, psychosis and the supernatural

A heartbeat pounds against a low, howling wind as an unseen someone – or something – approaches a deserted fairground at night. In the distance, the riderless big wheel turns. The theme tune begins with a solitary, unsettling whistle and the visitor pushes through the turnstile. As Harry Robinson's score swells to a crashing orchestral crescendo, an empty rollercoaster hurtles downward – and the theme reverts to that spine-tingling whistle. If viewers only recall one thing about Hammer's first TV series, it's likely this atmospheric opening title sequence. Yet much more deserves to be remembered about Journey to the Unknown (1968-69), in which 'the unknown' usually referred to the human mind's darker twists and turns.

On 2 April 1967, Hammer Film Productions' chairman James Carreras hosted a press reception at London's Dorchester Hotel to announce their biggest overseas deal yet. Hammer was partnering with 20th Century Fox and US TV network ABC to produce a 17-episode suspense anthology, Journey to the Unknown, scheduled to start shooting in May at Elstree's MGM-British Studios.



DID YOU KNOW?

Journey to the Unknown had a tie-in board game from Remco, where two to four players each had to attempt to find three secret rooms within a large, unmarked maze.



Roy Ward Baker directed The Indian Spirit Guide (S1,E11) starring Tom Adams, Marne Maitland and Julie Harris

In practice, the Americans pulled the strings. ABC and Fox provided most of the budget (almost £12 million), each episode would feature an American star as co-lead, and the series was set to premiere in the States before its UK broadcast. ABC also demanded their own choice of executive producer above Hammer's producer, Anthony Hinds: Joan Harrison, previously Alfred Hitchcock's personal secretary and script assistant, who took charge.

OBJECT OF DESIRE

The series launched on ABC on 26 September 1968 with Eve, starring Dennis Waterman as Albert, a department store shoe salesman seeking romantic love with little luck. After he falls for a blonde wax mannequin, he asks for a transfer to window dressing to be closer to the dummy. Things escalate as 'Eve' (Carol Lynley) sporadically seems to come to life. But when he's told that the dummies are to be melted down and replaced with new fibreglass models, Albert tries to sneak Eve out after closing, wrapping her in an expensive mink coat to keep her warm, and accidentally murdering his boss (who thinks he's trying to steal the coat).

Albert flees his rundown London flat and its lecherous landlady with Eve to hide in the countryside with a couple of quaint hippies he met on a protest march. But he's soon fleeing the police, until a clash with a pair of bikers leaves him dead in the woods – as a solitary tear trickles down Eve's waxen cheek.

It was a quirky, confident debut for a series that was uneven, yet produced several highlight episodes.

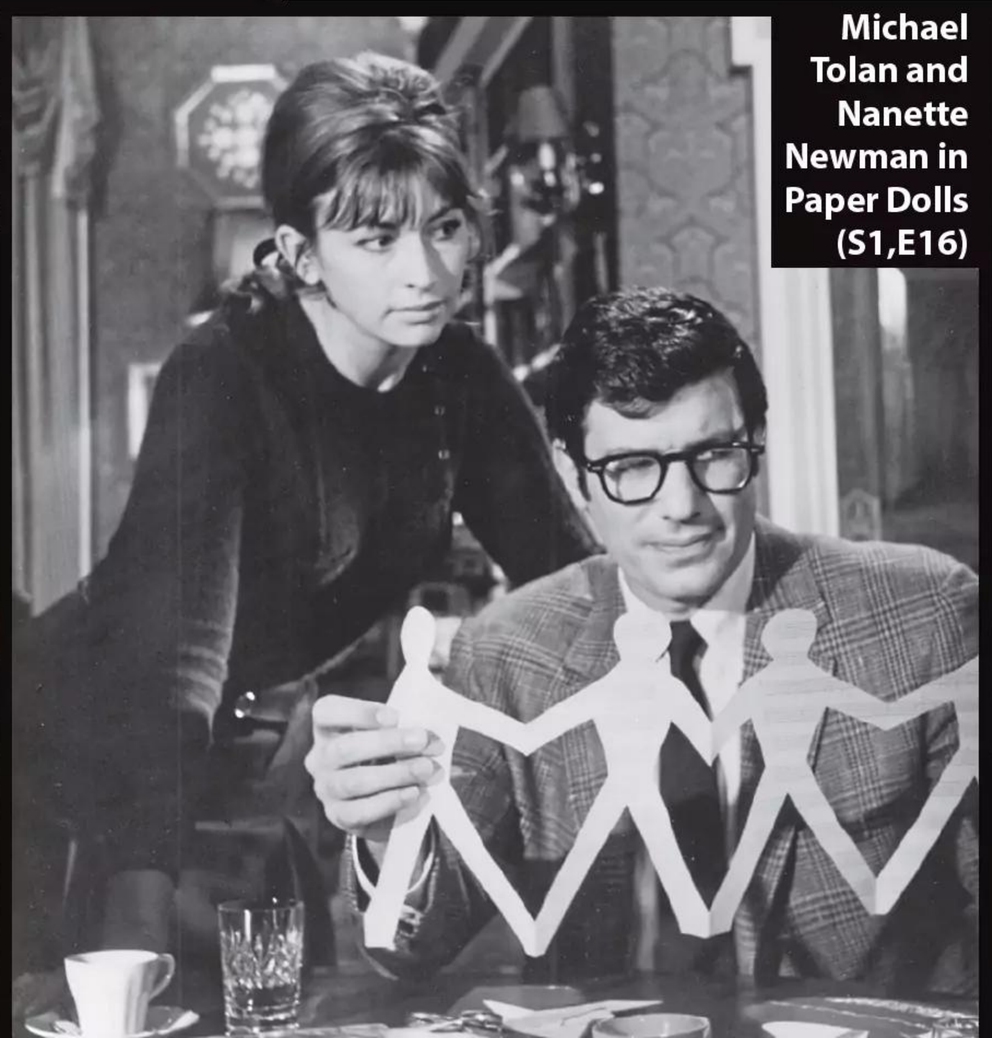
Somewhere in a Crowd – seemingly an uncredited adaptation of Ray Bradbury's short story The Crowd – stars David Hedison as William Searle, a TV journalist who keeps noticing the same five people at the scene of multiple serious accidents. When an extortionist he's interviewing is shot dead in revenge by a studio audience member, they're present again – as is an attractive redhead, Marielle (Jane Asher), sitting stressed amid the chaos. Under hypnotic regression, Searle discovers that the five figures were killed in a train crash he survived two years earlier. An affair with Marielle offers some comfort, but she proves to have a disturbingly close connection to the group...

SINISTER SIBLINGS

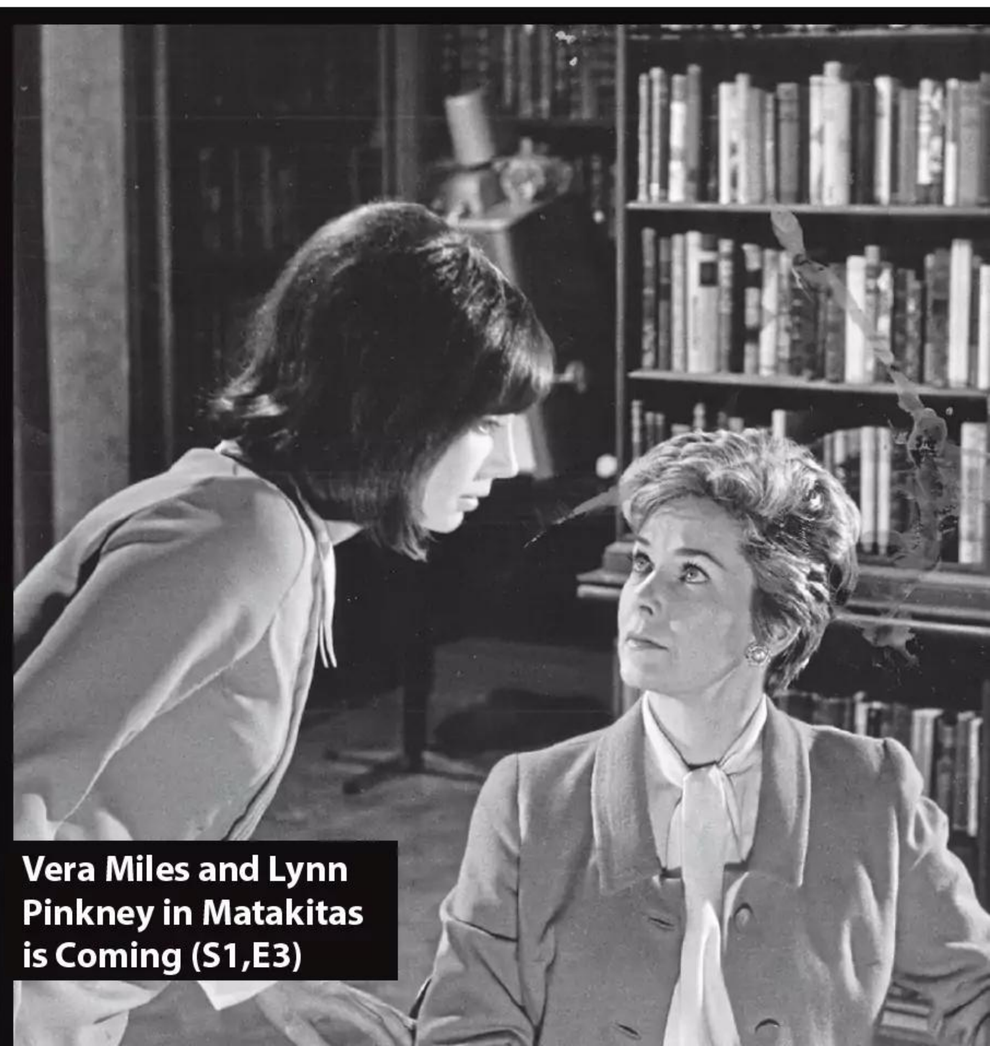
Another standout episode, Paper Dolls, has schoolteacher Craig Miller (Michael Tolan) stunned when his pupil Rodney Blake – normally without



Dennis Waterman and Carol Lynley in Eve, which is thought to have inspired The Carpenters song of the same name



Michael Tolan and Nanette Newman in Paper Dolls (S1,E16)



Vera Miles and Lynn Pinkney in Matakitas is Coming (S1,E3)



George Maharis and Barbara Jefford in Miss Belle (S1,E17) a man-hating spinster raises her orphaned nephew as a girl. The young boy actor, Kim Burfield, hated wearing dresses and frequently disrupted production

drawing ability – produces an excellent sketch, before mentally forcing a classmate who jabbed him with a compass point to leap through a closed window. Convinced someone is manipulating Rodney from afar, Miller teams up with fellow teacher Jill (Nanette Newman) to track down the boy's supposed imaginary playmate, Stephen.

Rodney, it turns out, is one of quadruplets (played by real-life brothers Roderick and Barnaby Shaw), whose biological parents were subjects of Nazi genetic experiments. The siblings, adopted by different families, can swap talents telepathically, but the most powerful and malevolent one, Stephen – known in the village he terrorises as 'the whelp' – can also probe minds to expose his victims' deepest fears. Miller soon discovers this first hand.

The Killing Bottle offers the unlikely combination of a fresh-faced Barry Evans with Roddy McDowall, as a naïve composer and his scheming manager, whose plot to have McDowall's homicidal brother committed takes increasingly sinister turns.

MAROONED & MURDEROUS

One on an Island stars former outstanding child actor Brandon de Wilde as Alec Worthing, a 20-something banker scarred by a domineering mother. After her death, he uses his inheritance to buy a boat, but falls overboard and is stranded on a remote desert island. His loneliness lifts when a beautiful young woman, Vicki (Suzanna Leigh), rises from the sea, claiming she's fallen from a ship. Romance blossoms, but when a crashed pilot (Robert Sessions) stumbles ashore, Alec's ruthless possessiveness boils over. By this point, however, we're already questioning how much of what we're seeing can be taken at face value.

By contrast, the series' creepiest setting comes in Matakitas is Coming, which unfolds in the cavernous shadows of a vast library. Crime journalist June Wiley (Vera Miles) is locked inside after hours while researching a psychotic killer who murdered a young librarian there in 1927. With horror, she realises the library has slipped back to that date, and history seems set to repeat itself.



In Do Me a Favor and Kill Me (S1,E5) Joseph Cotton asks to be killed so his wife (Judy Parfitt) can benefit from the insurance money

ILL-SERVED IN THE UK

The series debuted on ITV in the UK – London region only – on 16 November 1968, with The Indian Spirit Guide, starring Julie Harris as a widow keen to contact her late husband, in a prime Saturday evening slot. But its increasingly sporadic run soon shifted to late night before fizzling out. Granada only began airing the series for Lancashire late on Monday nights from mid-April 1969, with various other regions following even later, though broadcasts were typically patchy and incomplete. It enjoyed an equally scattershot revival throughout the Eighties, introducing the series to a new generation of night owls.

Yet despite its quality and wealth of cult-favourite actors, the series has still never had an official release on DVD, Blu-Ray or streaming. The reason? Unknown...

DID YOU KNOW?

Eight episodes were later paired as US TV movies, starting with Journey into Darkness, which combined Paper Dolls and The New People with introductions by Patrick McGoohan.

SCREEN CHIC
MOVIE STYLE



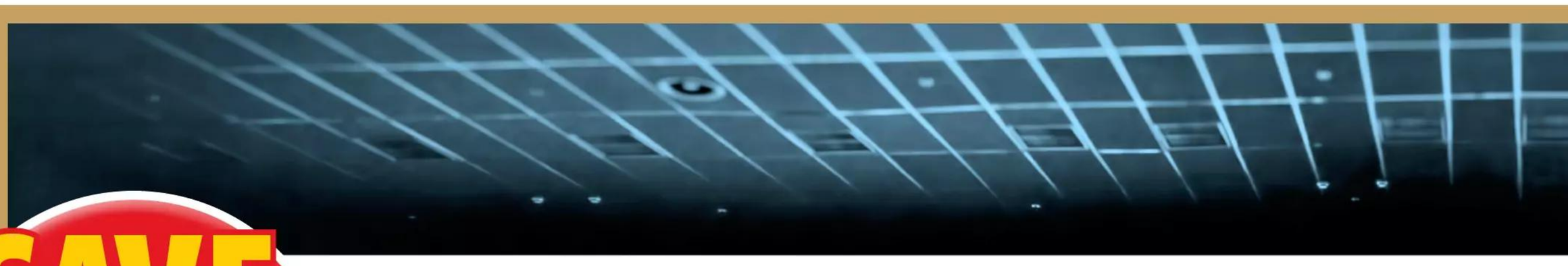
FILM: THE PHILADELPHIA STORY (1940)

ICONIC COSTUME: Classical, full-length white chiffon gown with ornate gold embellishments around the waist, neckline and along the sleeves.
SHE WORE IT WELL: Katharine Hepburn as Tracy Lord
DESIGNED BY: Adrian
SHOWSTOPPING SCENE: Tracy and journalist Macaulay Connor (James Stewart) have a little too much to drink the night before her wedding.

- Hepburn's film career was in the doldrums, having been labelled 'box office poison' by the press, but the huge success of her Broadway run in The Philadelphia Story was changing the script. With the help of Howard Hughes, she bought the film rights for $30,000.
- With creative control, Hepburn had her pick of director and co-stars, but this was her first time working with MGM's head costume designer Adrian.
- The pair hit it off immediately. She had a similar tall, athletic figure to Greta Garbo, who was a favourite of Adrian's to dress. Hepburn said of the partnership, 'Adrian was my favourite designer.'
- Russian designer Valentina had designed costumes for the Broadway production and Adrian chose to emulate one of these, a floor-length Grecian gown, adding the gold embellishment to accentuate Hepburn's long neck.

DID YOU KNOW?

Philip Barry, the play's writer, and Hepburn were good friends and the character of Tracy Lord was entirely based on her.



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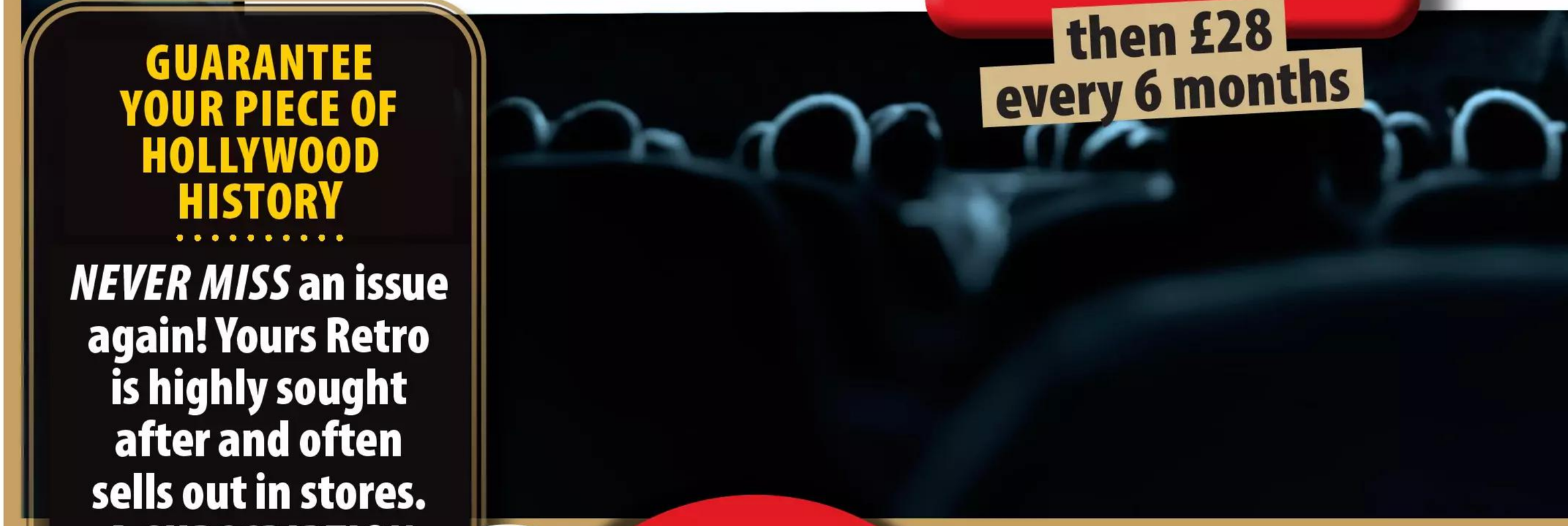
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1975: THE WIZARD OF OZ

In today's world where new films are now often released simultaneously in cinemas and on streaming services, it's hard to believe that it took more than 36 years for Dorothy and friends to make their debut on UK TV. First broadcast on Christmas Day afternoon 1975, The Wizard of Oz (1939) was a highlight of the BBC's schedule. Once Judy Garland was safely back in Kansas we could settle down to enjoy festive versions of our TV favourites The Generation Game, Some Mothers Do 'ave 'em and The Morcambe and Wise Show. And, for anyone who hadn't slipped into a food coma, there was another exciting film premiere that evening – Redford and Newman in Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969).

Festive family favourites

Cramming the family onto the sofa to watch a film (with a tub of Quality Street) is a time-honoured tradition. We chart 10 years of memorable blockbuster TV premieres

DID YOU KNOW?

After a fierce bidding war ITV spent £850,000 licensing the first six Bond films for TV. In the battle for viewer ratings ITV was determined to make the most of its purchase and the films became an essential part of their holiday schedule.



1976: AIRPORT

What better way is there to escape any festive family tension than sitting down together to watch a disaster movie? Airport (1970) had its TV premiere on Christmas Day evening 1976, and we watched aghast as a star-studded cast, including Burt Lancaster, Dean Martin, Jean Seberg, Jacqueline Bisset, George Kennedy, Helen Hayes and Van Heflin, fought to stay alive against the odds, battling bombers and blizzards. Alternatively, over on ITV, you could watch Rod Steiger and Christopher Plummer fight the battle of Waterloo (1970).

1977: THE DIRTY DOZEN

We had to wait until Boxing Day for our festive film fix in 1976 with The Dirty Dozen (1967) making its UK TV premiere 10 years after its first release. Films featuring epic ensemble casts soon became a staple of Christmas TV viewing and this was no exception, with Lee Marvin starring alongside Ernest Borgnine, Charles Bronson, John Cassavetes, Richard Jaeckel, Telly Savalas and Clint Walker in this wartime adventure.





1978: THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Thirteen years after its initial box office success The Sound of Music (1965) had its TV debut on Christmas afternoon in 1978. At almost three hours long, you would have had to settle in for most of the afternoon but, if you didn't mind missing the beginning, you could flick over to ITV and catch another network premiere – Sean Connery in Diamonds Are Forever (1971).



1979: THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE

Another year and another disaster took centre stage for our festive entertainment. The Poseidon Adventure (1972), broadcast for the first time on 23 December 1979, sees yet another star-studded cast, including Gene Hackman, Ernest Borgnine, Roddy McDowall and Shelley Winters, fighting for their lives. Also premiering over Christmas this year were, The Sting (1973) and Where Eagles Dare (1968).

1980: THE TOWERING INFERNO

By 1980 disaster movies were starting to feel as much part of Christmas as a Terry's Chocolate Orange. On Christmas Day we could catch the TV premiere of Airport 1975 (1974) with Charlton Heston and Karen Black. Then we were on the edge of our sofas on Boxing Day with a choice of The Towering Inferno (1974) debuting on the BBC or you could opt for a second helping of Charlton Heston with Earthquake (1974) on ITV.





1981: GONE WITH THE WIND

Southern belle Scarlet O'Hara (Vivien Leigh) swept onto our TV screens for the first time on Boxing Day 1981 – 42 years after Gone with the Wind (1939) took the box office by storm. With a run-time of three hours and 58 minutes the BBC took the unusual decision to screen the film in two parts so you had to tune in the following day to find out whether or not Rhett Butler (Clark Gable) actually did give a damn.

1982: DEATH ON THE NILE

Another star-packed Christmas Day debut saw the BBC giving over the prime evening slot to the 1978 adaptation of Death on the Nile. With Peter Ustinov as moustachioed sleuth Hercule Poirot quizzing the passengers, including Bette Davis, Jane Birkin, Mia Farrow, Angela Lansbury, David Niven and Maggie Smith. At the same time over on ITV you could catch the sci-fi adventure The Black Hole (1979) followed by Chas and Dave's Christmas Knees-up!



1983: FLASH GORDON

Flash Gordon was no stranger to UK TV schedules with the classic Buster Crabbe serials showing over Christmas in 1976 and 1977. But then on Christmas Eve 1983 we were treated to the TV premiere of the spectacular 1980 version starring Sam Jones, and Max Von Sydow. On Christmas Day there was a Disney first on BBC – 1950's Treasure Island, or you could see Christopher Reeve's Superman (1978) on ITV.





1984: MARY POPPINS

It was Supercalifragilistic to finally see the full-length Mary Poppins (1964) for the first time on UK TV, 20 years after its cinema release. If you were still sofa bound after the afternoon film there were special Christmas episodes of Blankety Blank, Hi-de-Hi!, The Paul Daniels Magic Show and the season finale of Just Good Friends, which left us wondering if Vince and Penny would ever get it together.



DISNEY AT CHRISTMAS

Whatever your age, one of the staples of the Christmas TV schedules was a Disney anthology show. Although the name changed (The Magical World of Disney, The Wonderful World of Disney, Disney Time) since 1953, we could expect to see a guest host, such as Julie Andrews, David Tomlinson, Hayley Mills, Dick Van Dyke or Val Doonican, appearing at a Disney theme park introducing clips from our favourite Disney films. The final Christmas edition, broadcast on Boxing Day 1997, was hosted by Keith Chegwin.

DIVA VS DIVA

Were two of the most beautiful women in the world really great rivals? Chris Hallam looks behind the rumours about Sophia Loren and Gina Lollobrigida…



Gina's stunt double died during the filming of Trapeze (1956) after falling 40ft and breaking her back

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2013 Gina Lollobrigida sold her diamond jewellery collection, raising £3.6 million for stem cell research

January 2023 saw the death of the Italian film star, Luigia 'Gina' Lollobrigida. She was 95. One of the very first big names to pay tribute, was another legendary Italian actress, Sophia Loren who described herself as 'deeply shaken and saddened' by the news. Though the 88-year-old Loren did not attend Lollobrigida's funeral in person, she sent a large bouquet of flowers to the church in Gina's honour.

In their post-war heyday, both actresses were not only incredibly famous and world renowned as two of the most beautiful and sexually desirable women on the planet, they were also seen as fierce rivals whose lives were marked by an intense competition for success, fame and attention.

But what was the truth behind Gina and Sophia's relationship? Were they really enemies or was the supposed feud between them merely a media concoction designed to maximise publicity for them both? The truth, as ever, lay somewhere in between.

TEMPTRESS OF THE TIBER

It was Gina who emerged first. Seven years older than Sophia, she was born near Rome in 1927. By the time she and her family had survived the Second World War, Gina's stunning good looks and sexual allure were becoming all too apparent. Originally studying sculpture, she then took singing lessons, began modelling and came third in the 1947 Miss Italia beauty pageant. She married Slovenian doctor, Milko Škofič who was happy to allow pictures of his bikini-clad wife to be published. These pictures soon came to the attention of the famous film producer, Howard Hughes.

Hughes brought Gina to Hollywood where he effectively launched her film career. Having previously bedded Marlene Dietrich, Rita Hayworth and Ava Gardner, Hughes had similar designs on Gina. 'He was very tall, very interesting,' Gina recalled of Hughes. 'Much more interesting than my husband.' Despite this, she always resisted his repeated amorous advances.

She starred in the Italian romcom, Bread, Love and Dreams (1953) and opposite Humphrey Bogart in Beat the Devil (1953). She was a star. Publicity described her as La Lollo, The Temptress of the Tiber, The Italian Jayne Mansfield, the most beloved Italian export since spaghetti or simply as 'the most beautiful woman in the world'. Around this time, she first encountered Sophia Loren.

There are relatively few photographs of Lollobrigida and Loren together. However, in one such picture (*left*), taken at a film festival in 1954, the two women are seated together. Both look young and beautiful naturally, but they also look awkward. Lollobrigida, in particular, looks like she would rather be anywhere else. Loren, who turned 20 that year, was then by far the least well known of the two. She nevertheless stole the show at the festival, diverting attention away from other guests such as Lollobrigida.

ENTER SOPHIA...

Born in Rome in 1934, young Sofia Scicolone had been wounded by shrapnel during the war, an injury that left a scar on her chin. Just as Lollobrigida's early career was shaped by Howard Hughes, Sofia's was guided by film producer, Carlo Ponti who met Sofia when judging her in a beauty contest when she was 15 and he was in his late 30s. They eventually married in 1957.

It was Ponti who persuaded her to become Sophia Loren, an easier name for non-Italian audiences to pronounce and spell (something Gina Lollobrigida didn't seem to worry about). He also encouraged her to learn English and to lose her strong Neapolitan accent.

By the time of the film festival photo, Loren was just breaking through as a film star. It was also around this time that the first rumours of a spat between the two women first emerged.

Things started to escalate when Loren was quoted as saying that ➤



She may have become a beautiful voluptuous woman, but until the age of 14 Sofia Scicolone was a skinny child whose nicknames were The Stick and Toothpick



Gina played a model who became a prostitute after a love affair went wrong in Woman of Rome (1954), which was given an X certificate when it was released in the UK three years later

she was 'bustier' than Lollobrigida. Lollobrigida retorted that Loren could play a peasant girl but never an aristocrat. This insult must have stung as Loren, the daughter of a railway engineer, later revealed that she believed herself to be descended from Italian aristocracy. She, in fact, played a peasant girl in Scandal in Sorrento (1955). This seems to have rankled Lollobrigida. The film was the third in a trilogy and the role had been Gina's in the first two films but, after a dispute over the fee, the part went to Sophia. 'We are as different,' Gina Lollobrigida said, 'as a fine racehorse and a goat.'

One headline screamed: 'Gina, Sophia, Open Warfare on Lot' and rumours soon spread that the two could not even be in the same room together. As the years went by, both would generally deny rumours of a feud, however, typically attributing these claims either to the media or to publicity stunts generated by the other party.



Sophia with Cary Grant on location while filming The Pride and the Passion (1957)

TWO WOMEN

Cary Grant was in a mischievous mood. 'Miss Lolloloren, I presume?' he declared, on first meeting Sophia when they made Houseboat (1958) together. 'Or is it Miss Lorenigida? You Italians have such strange last names I can't seem to get them straight!' In the end, of course, he fell for Loren's charms, as so many did.

Both actresses enjoyed prolific careers in Italian and English-language films throughout the Fifties and Sixties. Lollobrigida appeared with Burt Lancaster and Tony Curtis in Trapeze and alongside Anthony Quinn in The Hunchback of Notre Dame (both 1956). Loren worked with Peter Sellers in The Millionairess (1960) and with Charlton Heston in El Cid (1961). Loren seemed to gain the upper hand in the Sixties, however, after winning an Oscar for her acclaimed performance in the harrowing wartime drama, Two Women (1960).

In later life, Lollobrigida developed other interests, finding success as a photographer and pursuing a career in politics. In 1988, she and Loren were pictured together at an event honouring the success of musician Michael Jackson. But any talk of friendship blossoming between the two seemed premature.

Rumours of a feud continued into old age. 'She and her press agents started this "rivalry" with me – and she hasn't stopped for 50 years,' Lollobrigida said of Loren in 2015. 'It was really boring for me. I had enough of that.'

Two years later, she seemed to be reigniting things. 'I was not looking for any rivalry against anyone: I was the number one,' adding, somewhat disingenuously, 'I succeeded only thanks to myself, without any producer supporting me. I did everything alone.' Only with the death of Gina Lollobrigida, perhaps, did the strange tension between these two very famous women come to an end.



Sophia may have given an Oscar-winning performance in Two Women, but she did not attend the ceremony to pick up her award because of her chronic stage fright. Greer Garson accepted it for her instead

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1982 Sophia Loren served an 18-day prison sentence in Italy for tax evasion.

In celebration of Stevie Wonder's 75th birthday, David Reid uncovers the story of a musical icon whose fearless advocacy – from black pride to blind awareness – resonates louder than ever

HIGHER GROUND

Stevie Wonder is undoubtedly one of the most important and influential stars in the history of popular music. At the centre of his long and distinguished career is the set of six groundbreaking albums he released in the Seventies. From 1971's Where I'm Coming From through to Songs in the Key of Life (1976), Stevie seamlessly mixed eclectic influences – rhythm and blues, jazz, gospel, rock – while innovating the use of synthesisers and multitrack recording technology, often playing all the instrumental parts himself.

Although his acclaim and success spanned most of the preceding decade (as Little Stevie Wonder) and has continued – including hit duet Ebony and Ivory (1982) with Paul McCartney, ➤

DID YOU KNOW?

Stevie was born six weeks premature. The oxygen-rich atmosphere in the hospital incubator caused him to contract 'retinopathy of prematurity' – a condition that affects eye development – which left him blind.

and the Oscar-winning, I Just Called to Say I Love You (1984) – those Seventies LPs remain, arguably, his finest musical legacy. However, alongside that enviable achievement, the social consciousness that Stevie began to explore, both lyrically on those records and vocally in the wider world, has proved equally exceptional. In actively championing causes, including black civil rights and blind awareness, Stevie has helped change countless lives.

Alongside the classics, You Are the Sunshine of My Life and Superstition, Stevie's 1972 album, Talking Book, features the track Big Brother. Inspired by Orwell's 1984, the lyrics lament poverty, oppression and life in the ghetto, 'My name is secluded / We live in a house the size of a matchbox', and refer to the murders of 'our' leaders. Stevie said he felt that, '1984 is pretty close to what's happening... If I can do anything to help my people in respect of black pride then I'll do it.'

A MESSAGE OF UNITY

On 24 May 1973, Stevie attended the funeral of Clifford Glover, a 10-year-old black child who was killed by a New York police detective. He stated, 'I have followed the case. It brings America down another notch in my book. I hope black people realise how serious things are and do something serious about it... Black people are just now beginning to find their identity, and that's good, it's unfortunate that tragic things have to bring us together...' Stevie asserted that the black community needed to come together with pride, 'I may sound pessimistic, but we have serious problems that have to be dealt with. The man in DC (President Nixon) is cutting off all these programs and holding back funds. Who do you think it's hurting? The black man... we have always been the last to get and the first to have it taken away.'

That same year, Stevie participated in a number of benefits for the blind, including the Out of Sight Night at the Philharmonic Hall, New York with Ray Charles and Al Hibbler. He declaimed, 'People have so many distorted ideas about blind people and their supposedly limited range of activities. Most people seriously believe that my daily schedule, for example, consists of listening to my music and just sitting around or sleeping... Man, if they only knew how aware and concerned and involved in life blind people are.... To my way of thinking, there are many ways of being handicapped, and they certainly aren't all physical. And the really biggest handicap I see around me every day is in people who lack a sense of communication.'

MOTOWN MAN

As the decade progressed, Stevie continued to balance his recording career with activism, appearing and playing at important humanitarian events such as Human Kindness Day, a free concert in Washington DC, the One to One benefits for handicapped children and, in October 1975, the Wonder Dream Concert in Jamaica, a benefit for the Jamaican Institute for the Blind.

In 1975, Stevie negotiated a lucrative new $13 million contract with Motown records. Over the years his relationship with the company had had its ups and downs, with their 'hit factory' approach sometimes jarring with Wonder's restless experimentation and uncompromising politics. But, ironically, his continued commitment to the label was itself, ideologically driven. He revealed, 'I'm staying at Motown, because it is the only viable surviving black-owned company in the record industry. Motown represents hopes and opportunity for new as well



The Tamla-Motown Revue featured The Supremes, Smokey Robinson, Stevie Wonder, and Martha and the Vandellas



Stevie recording the charity single We Are the World in 1985 with (*l-r*) Lionel Richie, Daryl Hall, Quincy Jones and Paul Simon

as established black performers and producers. If it were not for Motown, many of us just wouldn't have had the shot we've had at success and fulfilment. It is vital that people in our business – particularly the black creative community – make sure that Motown stays emotionally stable, spiritually strong and economically healthy.'

Stevie Wonder hit the Eighties running with his homage to Dr Martin Luther King, Happy Birthday (1981), conceived as an anthem for the campaign to make King's birthday, 15 January, a public holiday. On that date in 1981, thousands marched through Washington DC to mark what would have been Dr King's 53rd birthday. Speakers included Diana Ross, Gladys Knight, Jesse Jackson and finally Stevie Wonder who passionately stated, 'These are not easy times, yet they are not hopeless times. We must refresh our souls and uplift our spirits and harmonise with our brothers and sisters... Dr King left an unfinished symphony which we must finish... We need a day to celebrate our work on an unfinished symphony, a day for dress rehearsal for our solidarity.'

PROGRESS AND HEALING

Two years later the senate finally voted in favour of the King holiday (to start from 20 January 1986), and Stevie released a statement, saying, 'Somewhere Dr King is smiling, not because his birthday is a holiday; but because he, too, is convinced that we are moving in the right direction. I know that Dr King appreciates that this day is a day for all Americans to celebrate love, peace and unity. It is not the cure-all, but it is a healing aid.'



Stevie Wonder dedicated his 1984 Oscar for I Just Called to Say I Love You to Nelson Mandela, which led to his music being banned in South Africa

While Stevie has become less and less prolific in more recent years, he has continued to be an important advocate for compassion and human rights.

A vocal opponent of apartheid in South Africa, Stevie joined protestors picketing the South African embassy in Washington DC in February 1985. The following month when he won the Oscar for Best Original Song, he accepted the award, 'in the name of Nelson Mandela'.

Stevie has only released one album this century, plus occasional singles. He most recently combined music with activism once again with the politically charged single, Can't Put it in the Hands of Fate (2020), featuring rappers Busta Rhymes, Rapsody, Chika and Cordae, in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and in response to the murder of George Floyd. And, in 2024, he released Can We Fix Our Nation's Broken Heart in support of Kamala Harris's ill-fated presidential run. Stevie also performed live at a campaign event and took the opportunity to confirm that he remains a positive voice and beacon of hope to this day, imploring, 'We must keep on keeping on until we are truly a united people of these United States and then we will reach a higher ground.'



Stevie Wonder and Coretta Scott King were at the White House in 1983 when President Reagan declared a national holiday in honour of her late husband Martin Luther King, Jr

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1976, Stevie Wonder became the first user of the Kurzweil Reading Machine, a multi-font device for the blind. Four years later he joined forces with inventor Ray Kurzweil to form Kurzweil Music Systems, adapting reading machine technology for musical purposes and designing electronic instruments.

Finding Metropolis

Fritz Lang's sci-fi masterpiece was thought to have been lost for decades. Jake Gwilliam joins the hunt for the original film



DID YOU KNOW?

Freddie Mercury's Love Kills, recorded for Moroder's Metropolis, was the singer's first solo release, though all of Queen recorded on it. It was nominated for Worst Original Song at the 5th Golden Raspberry Awards, losing to Drinkenstein by Dolly Parton, Rhinestone (1984).

Often cited as one of the most influential sci-fi films of all time, Metropolis, on its release in 1927, astounded audiences who had simply witnessed nothing like it before. If you've personally not seen the film in its entirety that would be understandable, as the original cut was lost for most of the 20th Century.

Shortly after its German premiere Fritz Lang's film began to be criticised for having communist sympathies and 'immoral undertones'. But there was a second problem – his original cut was around 153 minutes long.

To solve this problem, the film's US and European distributors (a consortium made up of Paramount, MGM and German production company UFA), hired American playwright, Channing Pollock, to adapt the film. Cutting the footage to 115 minutes Pollock also altered the plot, removing much of what the distributors deemed undesirable, but in doing so he left many of the characters changed and narrative arcs unresolved.

Once Alfred Hugenberg (a German businessman and later financial backer to Hitler) acquired UFA later that same year he ceased distribution of the original altogether and instead created his own version, further removing around 1000 metres of film, particularly any communist or religious subtexts that remained.

Then in 1936, UFA recut yet another version, this time even shorter at around 91 minutes, which soon became the only version available when Fritz Lang's original negatives were lost following the Second World War.

ENTER MORODER...

That is until the Eighties when Giorgio Moroder, Italian composer of Flashdance (1983) and Top Gun (1986) fame, acquired the rights to the film with the intention of giving it an all-new synth soundtrack in conjunction with contemporary artists such as Freddie Mercury, Bonnie Tyler and Adam Ant. But when he came to look at the visuals he realised that there was more to be done. 'When I bought the rights, all I wanted to do was put the music on the movie,' he revealed. 'I didn't plan to reconstruct Metropolis, but the problem was the lack of a definitive print.'

Moroder went to great, international lengths to reconstruct the missing parts of the film. Having first consulted a silent film expert in Munich, he travelled to Australia, New York, San Diego and Berlin collecting scraps of footage as he went. He found a few scenes here, a few stills there, but no complete print. Moroder applied his new soundtrack to this revised but still incomplete cut of the film, making other adjustments for modern audiences, such as colour tinting and changing the title cards to subtitles.

On release, Georgio Moroder's Metropolis (1984) was not well received. Moroder was criticised for the changes he had made, but when he was accused of tampering with the original he responded, 'there is no original'.

In 1998, renewed efforts were made by German film archivists, taking advantage of new digital techniques available to repair yet more incomplete copies found in archives around the world. The restored version of the film released in 2001 was the closest to the original yet and, at around 125 minutes, was the longest version of the film seen since its premiere, approximately 60 years earlier. Or so they thought...

ARGENTINE ARCHIVE

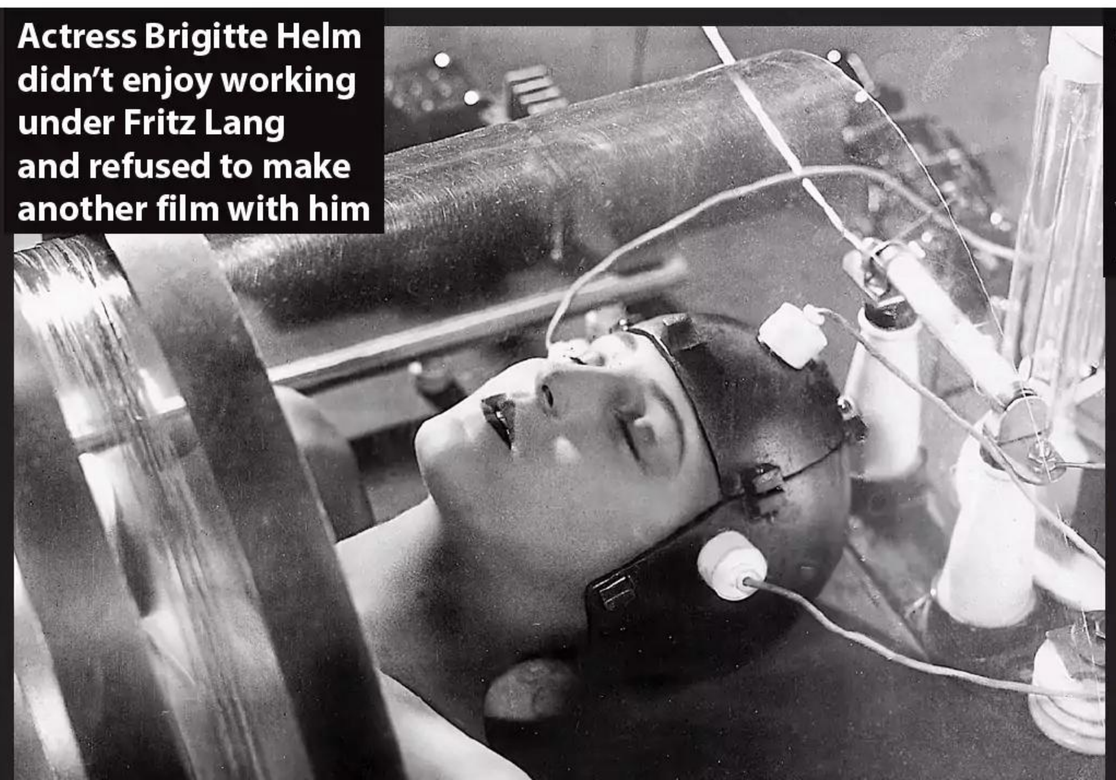
Back in 1988, film historian, Fernando Peña, was having a chat with Salvador Sammaritano, the founder of an Argentine film club, Cine Club Núcleo. They were discussing an upcoming donation to their collection, which included an old negative of Metropolis from the Argentine cultural archive, the Fondo Nacional de las Artes (FNA).

Peña thought nothing of it, until Sammaritano mentioned that he had been the projectionist when this particular print of Metropolis had been shown in 1959. Sammaritano recalled the print had shrunk and he'd needed to hold his finger on the gate of the projector to prevent the film from stuttering. 'I spent the next two hours and a half in that position' he said.

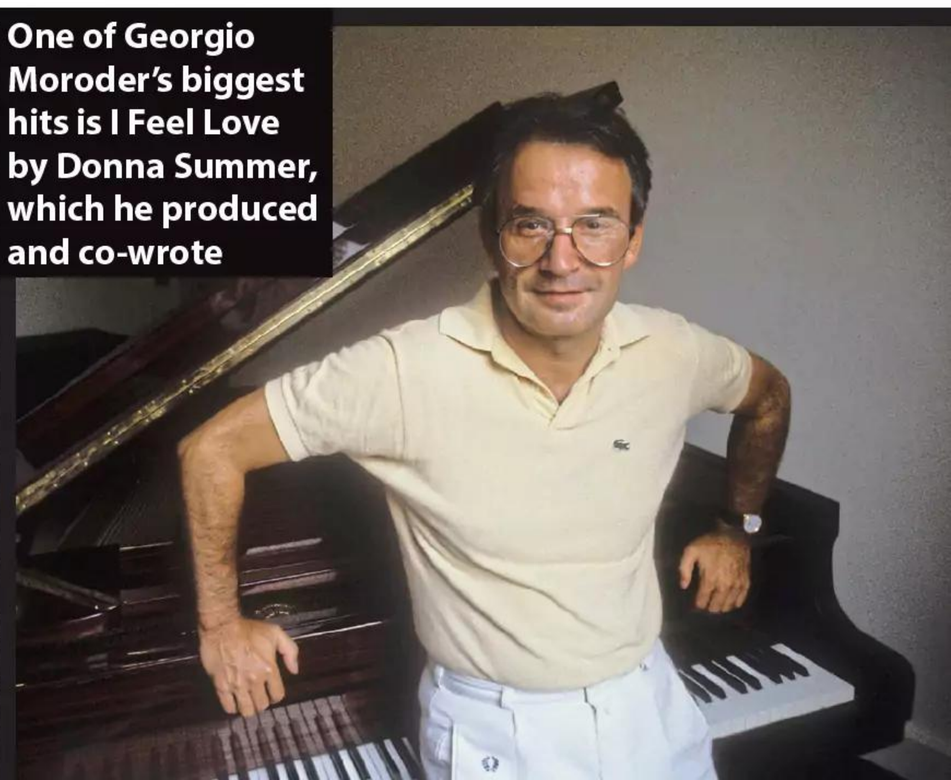
Peña asked if he was sure, to which Sammaritano responded, ➤



Fritz Lang fled Germany for Paris in 1933 after Joseph Goebbels asked him to make Nazi propaganda films



Actress Brigitte Helm didn't enjoy working under Fritz Lang and refused to make another film with him



One of Georgio Moroder's biggest hits is I Feel Love by Donna Summer, which he produced and co-wrote

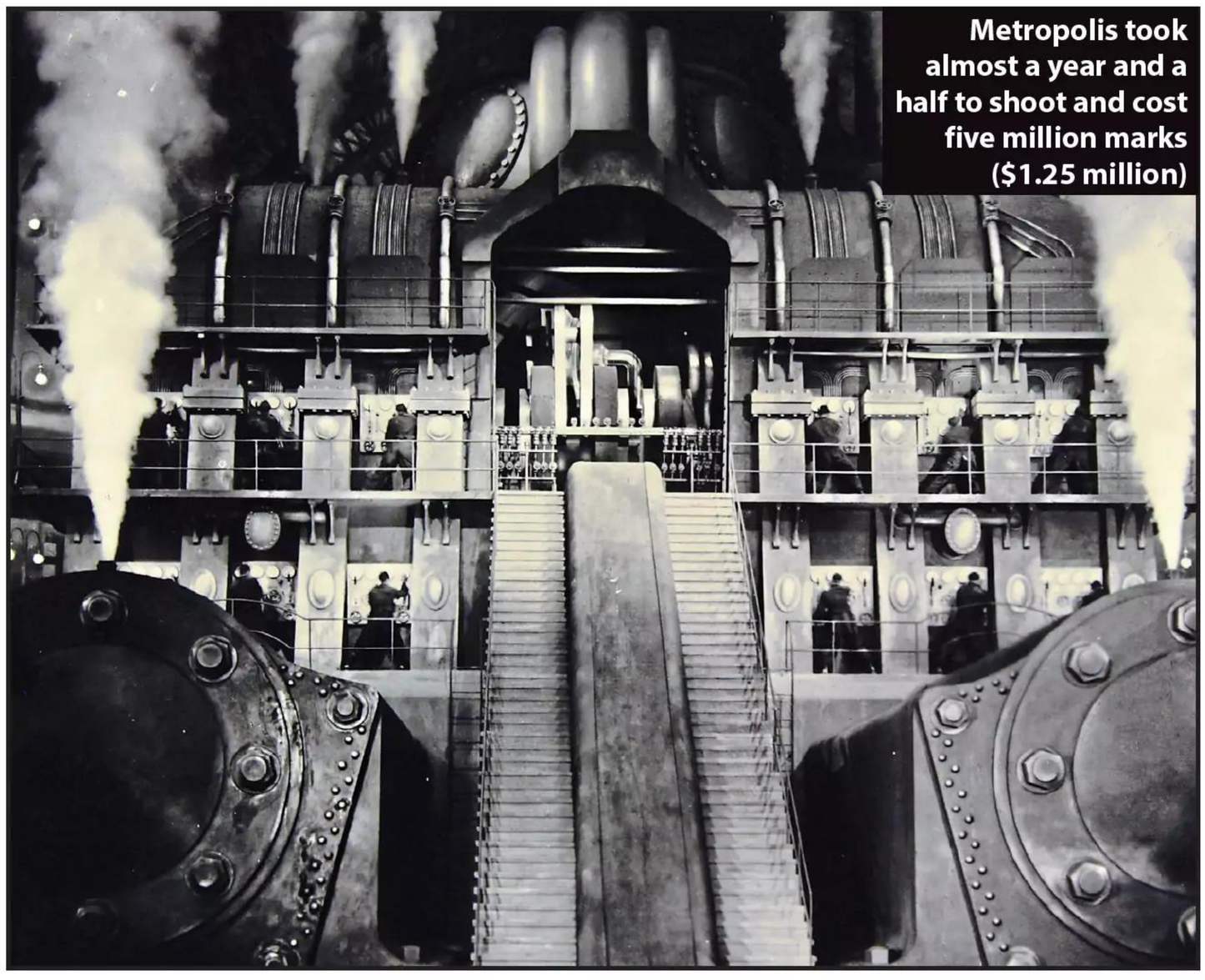
'My finger is still in pain!' Realising what this could mean, Peña immediately went to the FNA and requested to see the film and possibly copy it to videotape. There he met an immovable wall of bureaucracy. No one he spoke to was willing to delve into the archives to get it, or give him authorisation to do so. Still, Peña figured, the film was being donated to Cine Club Núcleo, so he'd be able to verify his suspicions that this might be the last remaining negative of Fritz Lang's original version of Metropolis on the planet.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS

How had this come to pass? When the film was first released in the Twenties, a company called Terra had been in charge of the worldwide distribution, and its president of operations in Argentina, a Romanian called Adolfo Zicovich-Wilson, went against the grain and, unlike most others, he didn't recut the film. No changes were made apart from translating title cards and adding an extended title card at the end of the film.

It is unknown how this single copy survived. Distribution companies were contractually obliged to destroy their copies of the film once their contract had run out. It's possible that a cinema didn't return their copy to Terra, or simply that Adolfo Zicovich-Wilson wanted to keep a copy for himself.

It then passed through a private collection before ending up in the FNA, which is where it stayed.



Metropolis took almost a year and a half to shoot and cost five million marks ($1.25 million)

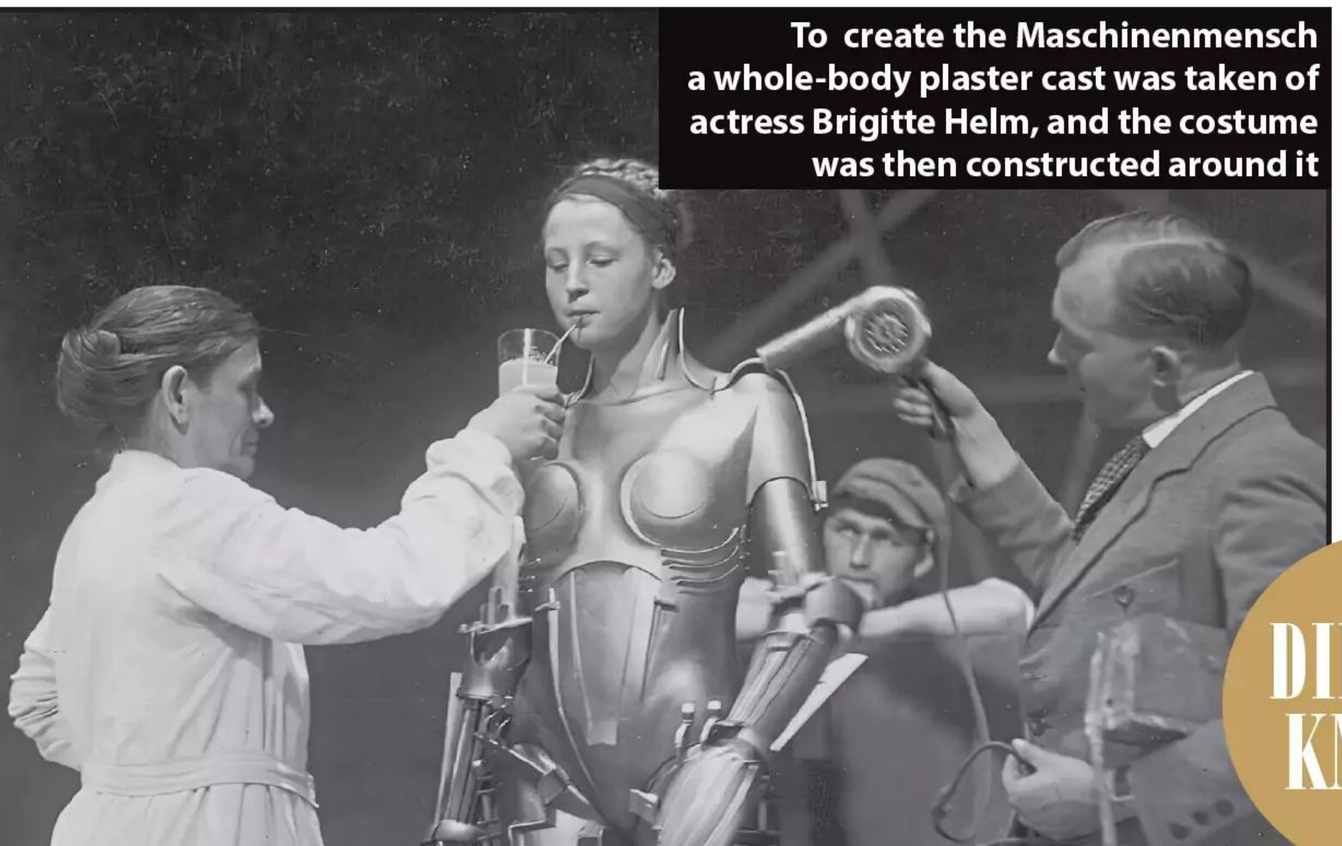
Despite repeated efforts to gain access over many years, Peña was refused again and again. Eventually the film, which in fact never was sent to the Cine Club Núcleo as promised, was donated to the Museo del Cine. But Peña had no better luck there. He once thought he'd got close when he was told that the film had been packed to go to a new building, only to go to the new building later to find it had been packed again to go to an even newer building.

In 2008, the new president of the museum was keen to renew relations with Cine Club Núcleo, to which Peña happily agreed, on the condition that he could at long last see the copy of Metropolis that he'd first requested 30 years earlier.

When he did so Pena almost immediately recognised that this was different to any version of the film he'd seen before, and matched the descriptions of the original.

Once verified, it travelled to Germany where historians and archivists worked to repair and reconstruct the film. The Argentine print, though complete, sadly showed signs of age and wear, but using new digital techniques the lost negative was combined with another incomplete copy found in New Zealand and the version produced in 2001. The team had brought Fritz Lang's original vision back to life. The film premiered again in 2010, 83 years after the first, and more than 50 years since it had been last seen in its entirety.

So, when lamenting the many films and TV shows that have been lost over the years, such as BBC's Doctor Who and Dad's Army, or the BFI's most wanted, Hitchcock's The Mountain Eagle (1926), it's worth remembering that in a public archive in Argentina, sat the complete negative of Metropolis for over 80 years. Safe and sound the entire time. Perhaps others, too, are collecting dust somewhere, just waiting to be rediscovered...



To create the Maschinenmensch a whole-body plaster cast was taken of actress Brigitte Helm, and the costume was then constructed around it

DID YOU KNOW?

Legendary concept artist Ralph McQuarrie has cited the Maschinenmensch as inspiration for the similarly golden-bodied droid C3-PO in Star Wars (1977)

MOMENT IN TIME

• 8 December 1963 •

FRANK SINATRA JR KIDNAPPED

A group of amateur criminals hoping to strike it rich engineered one of the most infamous kidnappings in American history. For several weeks two 23-year-old former high-school classmates from Los Angeles, Barry Keenan and Joe Amsler, had been trailing 19-year-old Frank Sinatra Jr from city to city as he started out on his own singing career.

Crooner Frank Sinatra's only son was in his dressing room after performing at the Harrah's hotel and casino in Lake Tahoe when, at around 9pm, Keenan entered, posing as a delivery man. Keenan and Amsler blindfolded and abducted their victim.

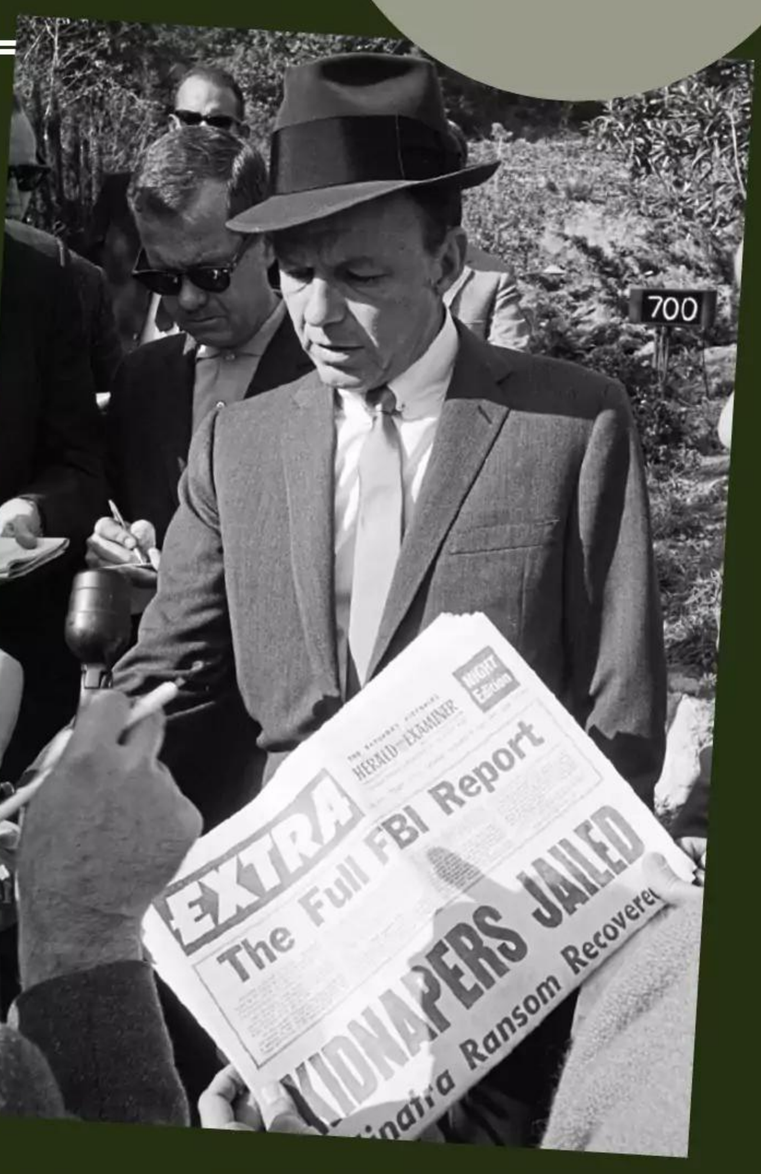
A third conspirator, John Irwin, acted as a go between to negotiate payment of the hefty $240,000 ransom for the teenager's safe return (equivalent to more than $2.4 million in today's terms).

Sinatra Sr, with the help of the FBI, delivered the money according to the kidnappers' instructions. However, while Keenan and Amsler went to pick up the money, a nervous Irwin freed their captive.

Sinatra Jr was able to help the FBI in pursuit of the kidnappers and, as law enforcement gathered evidence, Irwin become increasingly anxious. He confessed to his brother, who called the FBI and all three were arrested and almost all the ransom money was recovered.

Did you know?
Although initially sentenced to life plus 75 years Keenan (right) and Amsler (left) only served four and a half.

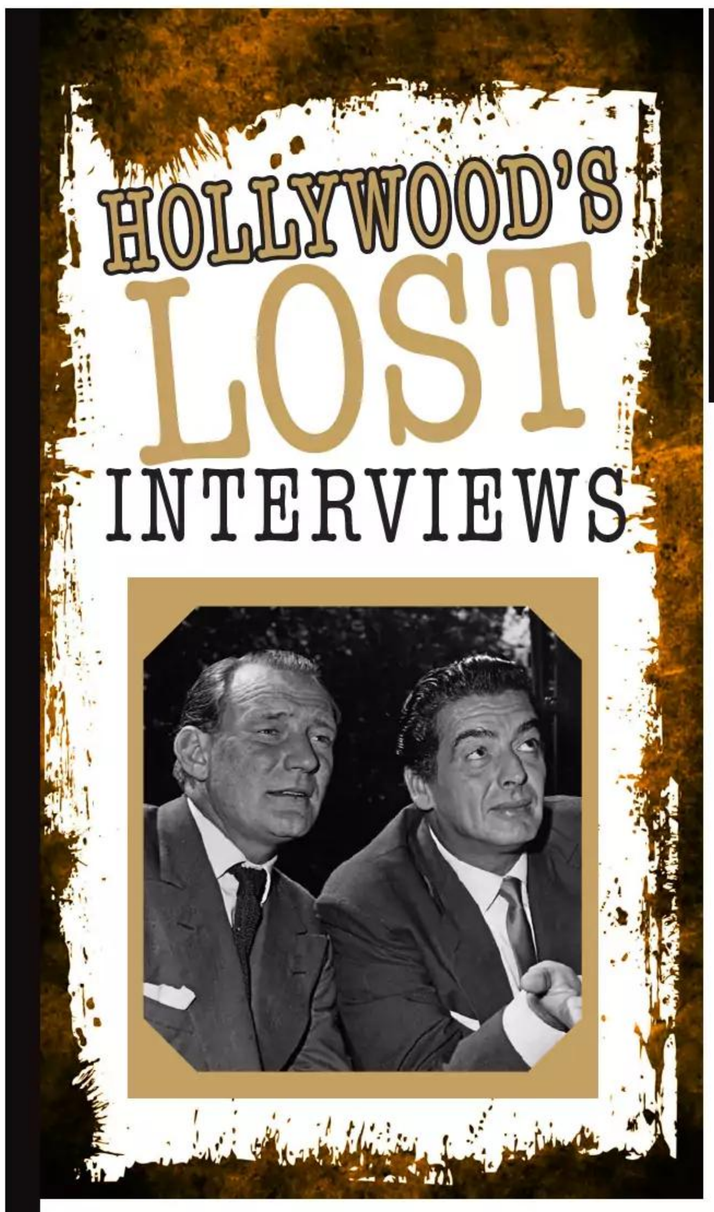




'I decided upon Junior because Frank Sr was tough. It wouldn't be morally wrong to put him through a few hours of grief.'
Barry Keenan in 1998







Retro is privileged to publish the 'lost' interviews of renowned journalist Roderick Mann. In the Sixties Roderick caught up with Trevor Howard and Victor Mature in Paris for some good-natured chat about life and the legacy we leave behind

'Speak only if it's worth hearing'

I had planned, actually, on spending a fairly quiet afternoon in my hotel room – but the yells and cries and abuse coming from the next suite finally proved too much.

And the voices were familiar. So I went in.

And there they were.

Victor Mature and Trevor Howard – The Hulk and The Hell-raiser holding a summit conference.

I found the conference going well. The bottle of Scotch was half empty and the personal insults and abuse were building up nicely.

But what, you may wonder, do these two very different actors have in common? Mature respects Howard and rates him one of the greatest screen actors in the world (which he is). In his turn, Howard respects Mature and rates him the last of the really high-living Hollywood characters (which he is); they get along famously.

When I arrived, Trevor Howard had just finished grumbling about his career, and Victor Mature – with his giant legs encased in cowboy boots and a 45in Cinemascopic chest – was handing him some wise, fatherly counsel:

'Why, you sweet son-of-a-bitch. I've been reading your goddam press notices. You walk away with every picture. What have you got to grumble about? Have you ever seen my notices? I feel like taking poison when I read them...'

'You double-headed idiot,' roared Howard. 'What's the good of notices? I never work. I can't live on notices. I need money.'

'Money!' said Mature. 'Money! Your feet must be sore from shovelling it into the ground out there at your home in Barnet. All I hope is that I outlive you. Because if I do I'm going to buy that house of yours and start digging. It's gotta be there, the loot. It's gotta be there. The spade concession – that's all I ask.'

'You'll outlive me,' croaked Howard, holding his chair in a curious sort of grip currently favoured in wrestling by the Singapore Strangler. 'I may go anytime, the way I feel.'

'Though when I do I want to go in America. That's the place to go.'

'Me,' said Mature, 'I want to go in England. I know I'd get a better turn-out there.'

'If I died in England,' said Howard morosely, 'they wouldn't even turn out of my pub in Barnet to watch me go by. Nobody cares.'

'Will you listen to him?' cried Mature, leaning forward in his chair so that the legs sank slowly into the deep pile. 'Will you listen to him? When Howard goes they'll bury him like one of those old ➔



Mature and his fourth wife Joy Urwick were together for 10 years

Eastern kings – wrapped up in his press cuttings, in the garden, among the loot. Oh for that spade concession!'

His glass suddenly cracked under the pressure of his enormous grip. Without a thought he flung it carelessly into an open cupboard.

'We can't just sit here drinking whisky,' sighed Howard, sitting there drinking whisky.

'We must press on. Oh, God, the thought of going back to all that English gloom and rain. And those terrible faces saying: "Aren't you glad to be back?"

'Glad to be back?' his face contorted in splendid rage. 'I'm never glad to be back. Never.'

'Me, I love England,' said Mature, his hooded eyes flickering about the room, an arm the size of a tree-trunk holding his glass aloft. 'All that rain. And the attitude.'

'What attitude?' shouted Howard.

'The attitude toward the rain,' said Mature.

Howard reached out and picked up a script which was lying on the table.

'What's this?' he asked.

'That's the script of my new film,' said Mature. 'I'm re-writing it.'

'Making it good?' said Howard.

'Are you mad?' roared Mature. 'Making it less awful.'

'There's a scene here,' said Howard, flicking through the pages, 'where you get on a horse. You've put a big question mark beside it.'

'I don't get on horses,' said Mature. 'My double does that. I'm a devout coward. In Hannibal, there was a scene where I was surrounded by charging elephants. And me with a patch on one eye for authenticity. How would you like to be among charging elephants with only one goddam eye?'

'I wouldn't mind,' said Howard, suddenly pensive.

'I get along well with elephants. I'm one of the few people who can draw an elephant blindfolded. Did you know that?'



The friends appeared together in just one film, the 1957 crime thriller Pickup Alley, where Mature (*above left*) played an FBI agent and Howard (*below*) a criminal mastermind. Anita Ekberg played Howard's mistress

He continued flicking through the script.

'There's a page here with the words "Good luck, Dick," at the top. What does that mean?'

'That scene is so awful I couldn't do anything with it,' said Mature. 'So that remark is addressed to my director. He'll need a lot of luck if he's going to film that particular slice of garbage.

'Seems to me,' said Howard, 'you've cut most of your own lines out.'

'I'm a great believer in that,' said Mature. 'I once worked with John Ford and he said: "Never open your mouth unless you've got something interesting to say." So now I give all the lines to other people! That way they look more stupid than I do.'

'I reckon,' said Howard, 'that this whole film business is getting stupid. Maybe we ought to retire.'

'Retire?' boomed Mature, leaping out of his chair. 'Are you crazy? My father would turn in his grave if he heard that kind of talk. Now I've got this far, looking this repulsive, the thing is to find the right kind of work. And I think I know just the thing – a TV series called The Mask.'

'What's so good about that?' asked Howard suspiciously.

'It's all about a man who goes around doing things in a mask,' said Mature. 'So I only work the first day. They film me putting the mask on and taking the mask off. Some other joker can do all the work in between. I'll be home with my feet up.'

Finishing up the last of the Scotch, Howard leaned forward and examined something on Mature's wrist which looked like the nose cone of an intercontinental ballistic missile.

'What the devil is that?'

'That's my all-purpose watch,' said Mature, with a faint glow of pride. 'When you're flying it tells you exactly where you are. If you're 50ft underwater you can still read the dial.'

'Sounds very useful,' agreed Howard.

'Useful nothing,' said Mature. 'I never fly and I wouldn't be caught dead underwater.'

'You know something,' said Howard, with a wide smile. 'You're a double-headed idiot.'

'And you,' said Mature, 'are a sweet scene-stealing son-of-a-bitch.'

And with that the conference broke up.

Interview written and edited by Roderick Mann

Next issue we publish Roderick's chat with Curd Jürgens.

Relax
Rewind
Replay...

Reel obsession

After a lifetime of going to the cinema Rob Robinson of Manchester shares the seven films that mean the most to him

My all-time favourite film, as I have memories of watching it with my father, is the iconic mystery noir **THE MALTESE FALCON (1941) (1)**. Humphrey Bogart is Sam Spade, a private detective who relies on his wits and intelligence. It's 61-year-old Sydney Greenstreet's Hollywood debut but it's Bogart who steals the show.

As a kid, I loved the Ant-Man comics and I longed for a film version so my hero would finally leap off the page. In **ANT-MAN (2015) (2)** physicist Hank Pym mentors the new Ant-Man Scott Lang (Paul Rudd). I'm pleased to say the film surpassed my expectations.

Growing up, I was also a huge Star Trek fan so I took my three sons to see **STAR TREK (2009) (3)** – it's definitely one that has to be seen on the big screen! Chris Pine is an inspired choice to play Captain Kirk. In fact all the principal actors are first rate and a credit to Starfleet!

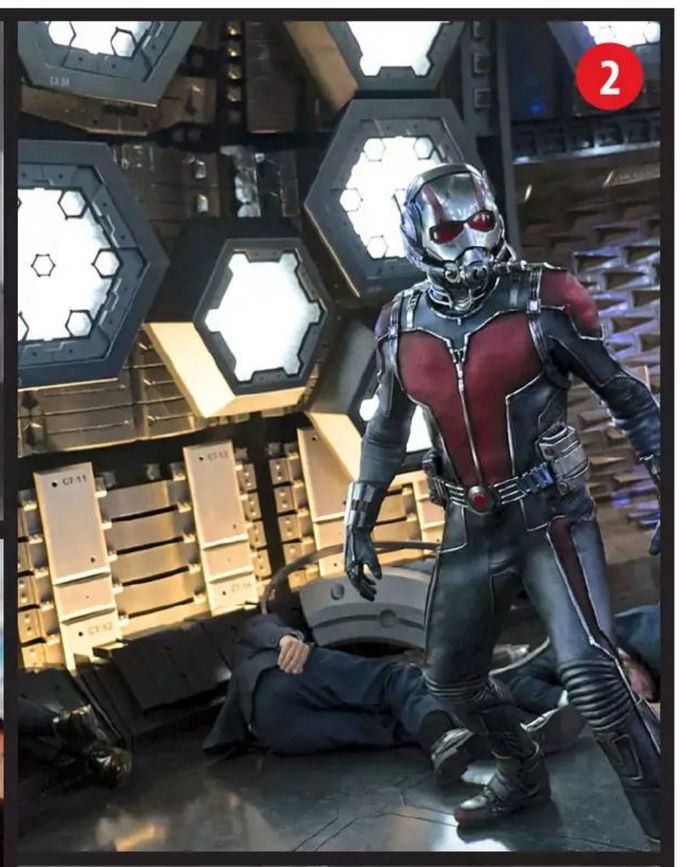
Previously a stage play, **12 ANGRY MEN (1957) (4)** is a complex and compelling courtroom drama where a young man's life hangs in the balance. A claustrophobic, tense atmosphere builds as the 12 jurors are torn between a clear case of guilt to one of reasonable doubt. Thought provoking and unforgettable. My verdict: 12 out of 12.

I first stumbled across **THE KING OF COMEDY (1982) (5)** by complete chance and was unaware at the time that my mother's cousin, Tommy Tolan, was in the film! Robert De Niro plays aspiring comic Rupert Pupkin as he tries to make it in the world of stand-up. The film also starred Jerry Lewis and Sandra Bernhard, but my final word though goes to my illustrious relative, Tommy – you did us proud!

I enjoyed **THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO (2002) (6)** with my sons. Falsely imprisoned Dantès (Jim Caviezel) befriends fellow prisoner, Abbé Faria (Richard Harris) before escaping to seek revenge on the scheming Fernand (Guy Pearce). A wonderful swashbuckling adaptation of an enduring classic.

Michael Crichton is at the helm as writer and director of **WESTWORLD (1973) (7)**. In a futuristic theme park a virus is spreading among the life-like robots and they begin to show signs of hostility towards the human guests, who are unaware that their lives are in imminent danger. Gunslinger android (Yul Brynner) hunts down first-time guest Peter Martin (Richard Benjamin), who desperately tries to stay one step ahead of his deadly pursuer. Chilling and ahead of its time!















Tell us your magnificent seven films and why they mean so much to you. Contact details on page 3

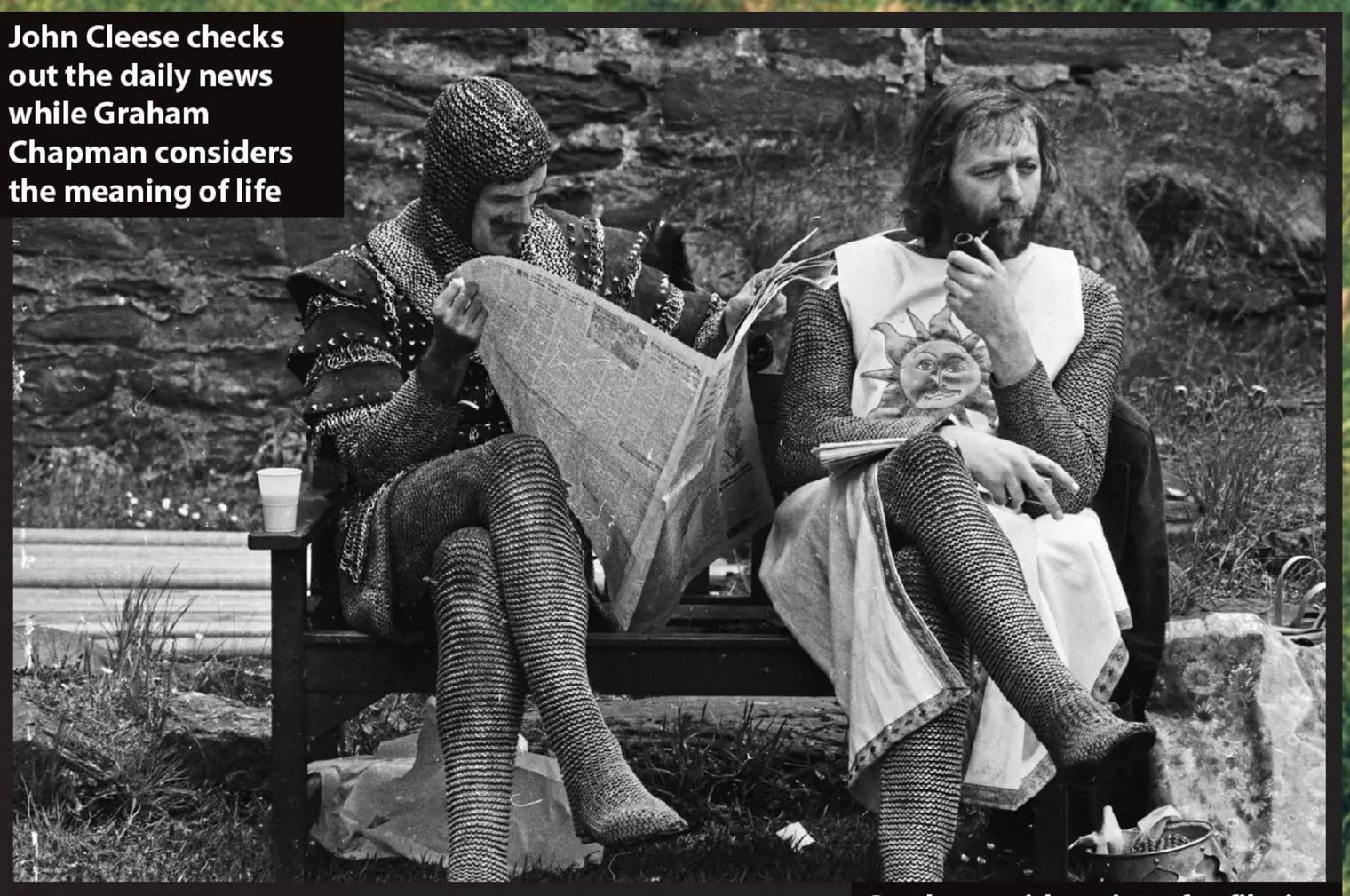
A BIT OF A KNIGHTMARE

1975's Monty Python and the Holy Grail is one of the greatest comedies ever. But, writes Jordan Bassett, the shoot was so disastrous that the cast feared for their lives

There are, by this writer's count, no fewer than 21 jokes in Monty Python and the Holy Grail before the film has even begun. Thanks to a hilarious opening credits sequence, these include – but are not limited to – gags about a violent moose and a dispute over Swedish subtitles, which shows just how much imagination the comedy troupe ploughed into their first-ever narrative film.

A spirited retelling of King Arthur's quest for the Holy Grail, the movie has become a cinema legend of its own. With a hang-dog Graham Chapman in the lead role and fellow Pythons John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones and Michael Palin cast as his Knights of the Round Table in zany sketches strung together by the self-consciously threadbare plot, it's rightly gone down as an epic comedy classic.

But the film, cobbled together on a miniscule budget of around £200,000 (claims of the actual ➤



John Cleese checks out the daily news while Graham Chapman considers the meaning of life



Castle considerations for filming were disrupted when Scottish officials raised concerns

DID YOU KNOW?

The original release of Grail didn't feature the famous scene where numerous characters shout at some of the cast to 'Get on with it!' Ironically, the Pythons felt it slowed the pace down, though it was later restored on DVD.

amount have varied over the years) almost didn't get made at all. The production was plagued with infighting and the lead actor so afflicted with alcoholism that he could barely perform. The main shooting locations, in central Scotland, were caked in Biblical levels of mud and so dangerous that John Cleese genuinely feared for his life. When they finally screened the result for visibly unimpressed investors, producer Michael White walked out.

So how did they turn it around? The story of how the Pythons snatched victory from the jaws of defeat is one of the most surprising in British film. The Knights Who Say 'Ni!'; The Black Knight who responds to dismemberment with the immortal line, 'It's just a flesh wound!'; The Rabbit of Caerbannog – these are among the funniest scenes ever committed to celluloid.



The mud and cold added to the misery of the shoot… the rush back to the hotel to secure hot water for a bath became vital

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

From the outset, disappointment set the tone. Although they were among the country's most successful comedians in 1973 (when work first began on what they affectionately refer to as Grail), the Pythons were dissatisfied with And Now for Something Completely Different, 1971's feature-length compilation of their sketches reshot without a studio audience.

It was co-directors Gilliam and Jones, 'the two Terrys', as Palin dubbed them in an interview with BBC Culture – who campaigned for the troupe to make a 'proper' narrative movie. Not everyone was on board, but Palin loved cinema as much as the Terrys and saw such a feature as the next logical step.

Palin had the idea to reinterpret the Arthurian legend. The film's first draft, a collaborative effort, featured some Cleese-penned scenes set in the modern day, with Medieval knights cavorting about in Harrods. Though this didn't work, its anarchic spirit perhaps set the tone of the project, as they realised that the legend allowed for

DOUBLE TROUBLE

The two Terrys in the directors' seats, Gilliam and Jones, didn't see eye to eye. Jones' priority was to get the film made on budget and as quickly as possible. Gilliam, a perfectionist who enjoyed an illustrious directing career after Grail (his debut feature), demanded punishing retakes that tested everyone's patience. Cleese claimed that, as Python's animator, he treated actors like bits of paper that could be moved around.

Gilliam felt that the comedy relied on the realism of the film. The audience had to see Grail as a true, down-and-dirty epic, he explained, in order for the comedians to send up the world that they'd created.

After the gang screened the abysmal rough edit of the film to horrified investors, Gilliam received most of the blame because his focus on realism had allegedly drowned out the comedy. There were 13 test screenings before Grail was considered up to scratch.







Graham Chapman as King Arthur could not cross the Bridge of Death because of a bout of vertigo

characters to break off regularly from the main plot.

We first encounter Arthur and his trusty servant, Patsy (Gilliam), clip-clopping along the mountainside in AD 932. Except, of course, they are not riding gallantly on horseback. In one of the film's many running jokes, they're simply pretending to be astride trusty steeds while Patsy bangs together two coconuts to signify the sound of horses' hooves. 'If we'd had the money,' Gilliam admitted in the 2003 book, The Pythons Autobiography by the Pythons, 'we would have had real horses.'

But they didn't have the money. In fact, that miniscule budget was pieced together in much the same way as the script. According to a tweet Eric Idle posted in 2021, Michael White stumped up the biggest chunk, while the rest was contributed in smaller portions by various musicians who admired the Pythons' rock 'n' roll approach: Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Jethro Tull frontman Ian Anderson and songwriter Tim Rice. Additionally, a trio of record labels threw some coffers in the pot: Charisma (to whom the Pythons were signed for their comedy LPs), Island and Chrysalis.

Even in the mid-Seventies, £200,000 (approximately £1.3 million today) was a stretch when it came to making an Arthurian epic. For one scene, the Pythons were reduced to using a real-life dead sheep from a nearby field, while it has been claimed that Chapman, who'd studied medicine, provided tetanus shots against the unsanitary conditions. Certainly, the money wasn't being lavished on the lead actors who, despite having also written the script, were paid just £4000 each.

It wasn't being spent on accommodation, either. Kim 'Howard' Johnson, author of The First 28 Years of Monty Python, told US radio syndicator NPR that Doune's Woodside Hotel, where the cast and crew were stationed during the month-long shoot, left a lot to be desired, revealing, 'At the end of each day... there was a huge rush for all the buses and vans to go back to the hotel, because only the first 60% of the people that made it back to the hotel got hot water.' The Pythons were even asked to share rooms (an indignity Cleese flat-out refused).

There were problems, too, with the location shoot. The Terrys had scouted a number of castles in the area, but a week before filming ➔

DID YOU KNOW?

At one cinema during Grail's initial run in the US, fans were each handed two halves of a hollowed-out coconut to knock together after seeing the film. Cinema-goers waiting in line for the next screening were left a little confused.

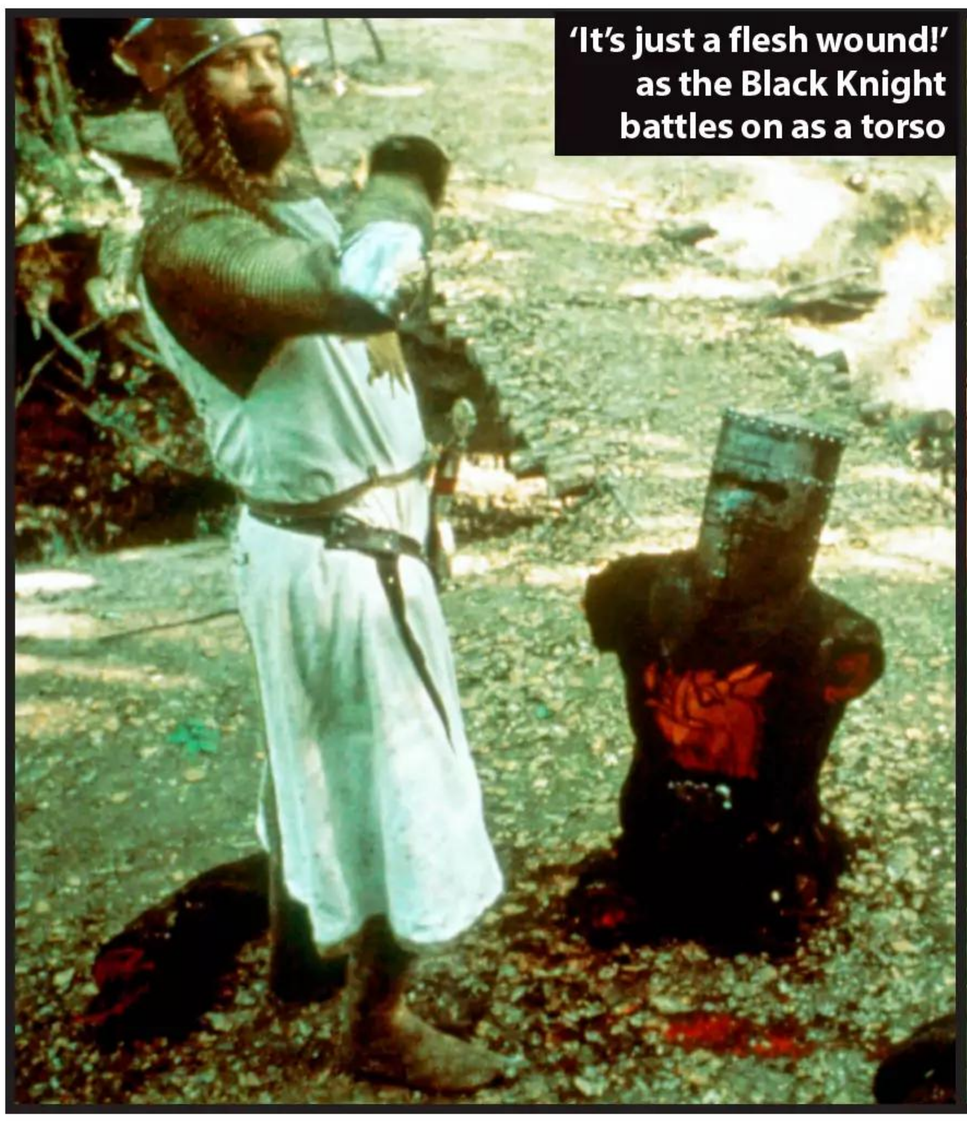
was due to begin they received a letter from Scottish officials. Due to concerns about the usage of the buildings, their access would be withdrawn. In the end, Doune Castle and Castle Stalker, a couple of hours away, were used to represent three different locations.

AN UPHILL STRUGGLE

Even when filming began, the setting proved to be a problem. A few days into production, Jones realised that a chosen shooting spot was close to the road in theory, but half an hour's walk uphill in practice. This would be fine with your hiking boots and anorak for a blast of fresh air; less ideal when clad in rain-sodden chain mail (which was in fact very heavy wool) as you lugged bulky camera equipment.

By this time, the cast and crew might have wondered if the challenged film was cursed, given that the camera broke on the first day of the shoot and their leading man wasted no time in proving himself a liability.

At 7am on the drizzly first day, Chapman was required to cross the so-called Bridge of Death. In the film, this is part of a side-splitting scene in which grizzled sorcerer Tim the Enchanter



'It's just a flesh wound!' as the Black Knight battles on as a torso



(Cleese) bamboozles the easily bamboozled knights with such fiendish questions as, 'What is your favourite colour?' (Amazingly, one of them manages to get it wrong). In reality, though, it was no laughing matter as Chapman – a mountaineer and keen sportsman – fell at the first hurdle.

'Graham, as King Arthur, got vertigo and couldn't go across the bridge,' Palin wrote in his diary at the time. 'He spent the day unhappily cold and shaking.'

Chapman explained, in George Perry's 1994 book, Life of Python, that he'd suffered delirium tremens because he hadn't had a drink that morning: 'I realised I was letting my friends down, and letting myself down. I stayed more or less on an even keel, not drinking too much, but I resolved to stop as soon as I could.'

To be fair, Chapman wasn't alone in his fear of said bridge, which seemed to live up to its name. Cleese also refused to cross the rickety pathway and sent a stunt double in his place. At one point, as the wind whipped up beneath Tim's cloak, he realised that there were dangerous drops – one of which he considered lethal – on either side of him.

Palin, meanwhile, played a 'mud-eater'. With Gilliam fixated on realism, this meant actually chowing down on a combination of chocolate and actual mud, with

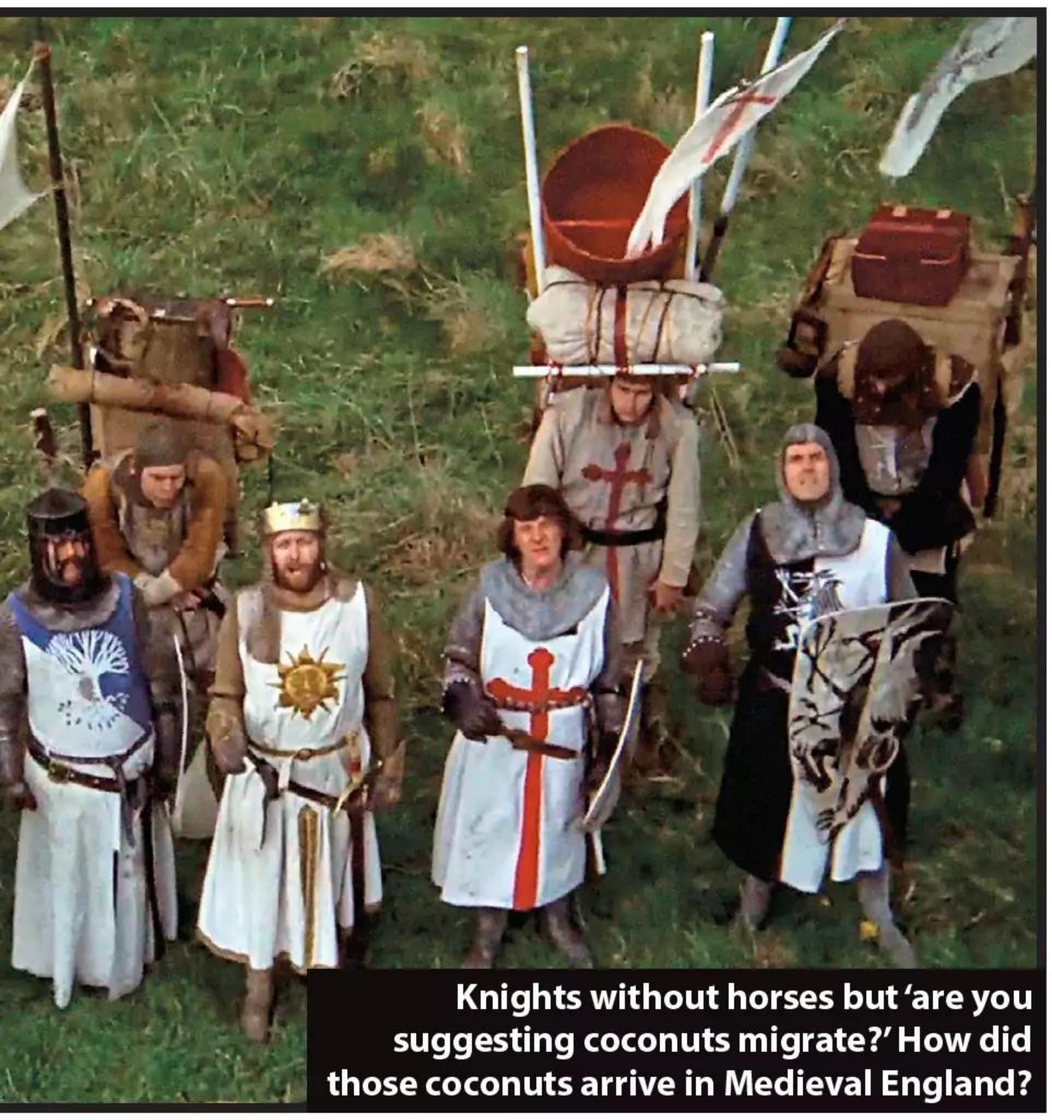


A LOVING RIP-OFF

The title of Spamalot, the enduring stage musical spin-off from Grail, is taken from the film's big musical number, 'Camelot Song'. This all-singing, all-dancing set piece sees Camelot's knights belt out the immortal line, 'We dine well here in Camelot / We eat ham and jam and spam a lot!'

When the Eric Idle-penned musical arrived on Broadway in 2005, its title was Monty Python's Spamalot: A Musical (Lovingly) Ripped Off from the Motion Picture Monty Python and the Holy Grail. This set the tone of an ingeniously daft, self-referential show that has grossed over £126 million.

Not everyone was initially convinced, mind. After the musical moved to London's West End in 2006, The Guardian deemed it 'so-so, alternately laugh-out-loud silly and a teeny bit tedious'. By the time Spamalot returned to Broadway in 2023, though, critics' attitudes had softened, with Time Out affectionately dubbing it 'a lark'.



Knights without horses but 'are you suggesting coconuts migrate?' How did those coconuts arrive in Medieval England?

the ratio unfortunately weighted on the latter. After Palin crawled through the sticky ooze for eight agonising takes, the Terrys informed the team that the scene had been perfect, except that Palin had been positioned incorrectly the whole time. It would need to be done all over again.

'I went absolutely ape and threw myself in the air,' the usually placid Palin recalled, 'landed in the mud and just wiggled my legs around, screamed and yelled for about five seconds. There was absolute silence and then John and Graham just led this spontaneous applause. John said he'd never seen anything like it, he'd never seen me angry before.'

REACHING THE HOLY GRAIL

As filming progressed, however, the mood began to change dramatically. When they screened rushes at the end of each day, the whole team began to realise that they were really on to something. 'Everyone is shattered by the amount of overtime on the first week,' Palin wrote in his diary on 4 May, 'but it looks to be achieving a worthwhile effect, no one is really complaining any more.'

Alas, the buoyancy couldn't last. The screening of a rough edit for investors was an unmitigated disaster that called into question the film's mere existence. Gilliam and editor John Hackney had scored the action in such a realistic way that the gory sequences landed with a nauseating thud. There were booms in shot and the pacing dragged. 'The film was 20% too strong on authenticity and 20% too weak on jokes,' Palin's diaries reveal.

Although producer Michael White walked out without speaking to the Pythons, whom other investors regarded awkwardly, Eric Idle made the grandest statement by leaving halfway through the film.

With all the gumption that had made them so successful in the first place, however, the Pythons bandied together. They reshot some scenes on Hampstead Heath, cut and recut and rescored Grail with a parodic soundtrack until it was as funny and zippy as their original sketches. When it was finally ready to be seen by the public on its opening night, Chapman was a nervous wreck – though his real-life troubles had imbued Arthur with relatable pathos.

Initial reviews might have been mixed, but the film was an immediate smash. Fans queued up for its first screening in New York, while Chevy Chase and George Harrison were spotted in line for the initial LA showing. The low-budget bonanza raked in a staggering £2.8m and made the Pythons stars in the US.

Grail's relevance continues today, given the ongoing 2023 revival of its spin-off musical, Spamalot. In that BBC Culture interview, Palin and Gilliam praised the hit stage show, though the latter had one quibble: 'It wasn't muddy enough.'

TOP 5 BOX OFFICE GOLD...

WILLIAM POWELL



Mister Roberts (1955) $484.2m



The Great Ziegfeld (1936) $483.9m



Life with Father (1947) $434m



How to Marry a Millionaire (1953) $433.2m



Ziegfeld Follies (1945) $312.6m

** Adjusted domestic box office gross using current movie ticket price (in millions) according to ultimatemovierankings.com*

Merry Xmas Charlie Brown

Chris Hallam explores how a little cartoon made 60 years ago has become a much-loved festive TV tradition

In December 1965, American audiences were treated to A Charlie Brown Christmas, a festive TV animation special featuring Charlie, his dog, Snoopy and his ever-expanding cast of friends. It appeared rather later on British TV, making its debut in 1970. The story was simple enough. Charlie is in low spirits and grows disillusioned by the commercialisation of Christmas and by his failure to either direct the school Nativity play or to decorate an incredibly threadbare Christmas tree. However, without wishing to spoil anything, by the end, his friends have rallied round him, carols have been sung, and the cartoon ends on a high note.





While accepting the Emmy for his film, Charles Schultz said simply, 'Charlie Brown's not used to winning, so we thank you.'

For a variety of reasons, the network producing the animation had been convinced A Charlie Brown Christmas would be a failure. They worried about the absence of a background laughter track and by the decision to use actual children to provide the voices for most of the characters. They were also uneasy about a sequence in which Charlie's friend, Linus, delivered a speech directly from the Bible and were aware there had been difficulties animating Charlie himself simply because of his unusually large, round head.

They needn't have worried. In the end, the cartoon proved to be a triumph, winning an Emmy and becoming an instant Christmas classic. It not only paved the way for many other Charlie Brown cartoons on screen, but it has been shown on TV every December in the 60 years since.

THE COMIC STRIP PRESENTS...

Charlie Brown and Snoopy had appeared in the daily syndicated comic strip, Peanuts, first created by the young cartoonist and Second World War veteran, Charles M Schultz in 1950. Schulz had previously produced a similar-ish strip called Li'l Folks which ran in his local paper between 1947 and 1950. Charlie Brown, a nervous, but good-natured boy with barely a hair on his head appeared in the new strip from day one. His dog, Snoopy, first appeared two days later. A beagle, Snoopy was clearly a very unusual type of canine from the start, sleeping on the roof of his kennel and later entertaining himself by pretending to be a First World War flying ace. In the Peanuts cartoon strip Snoopy's internal monologue is seen in thought bubbles, but, unlike other similar characters such as Garfield, created by Jim Davis, we generally never heard what Snoopy was thinking when the strip was adapted for TV. In 1966, Snoopy was joined by a scrappy little yellow bird who was later named, Woodstock.

The strip evolved, although always remained simply drawn. The cast of characters – all of them children – gradually expanded over time. Charlie was joined by the slightly aggressive Lucy in 1952, for example, who was soon followed by her brother, the always amiable, Linus, who could often be seen clinging to a security blanket. Charlie's younger sister, Sally was born in the strip in 1959 and she soon grew from a baby to a young child by the early Sixties (thereafter always remaining the same age). She quickly developed a permanent crush on Charlie's friend, Linus, antagonising him by constantly referring to him as her 'Sweet Babboo'.

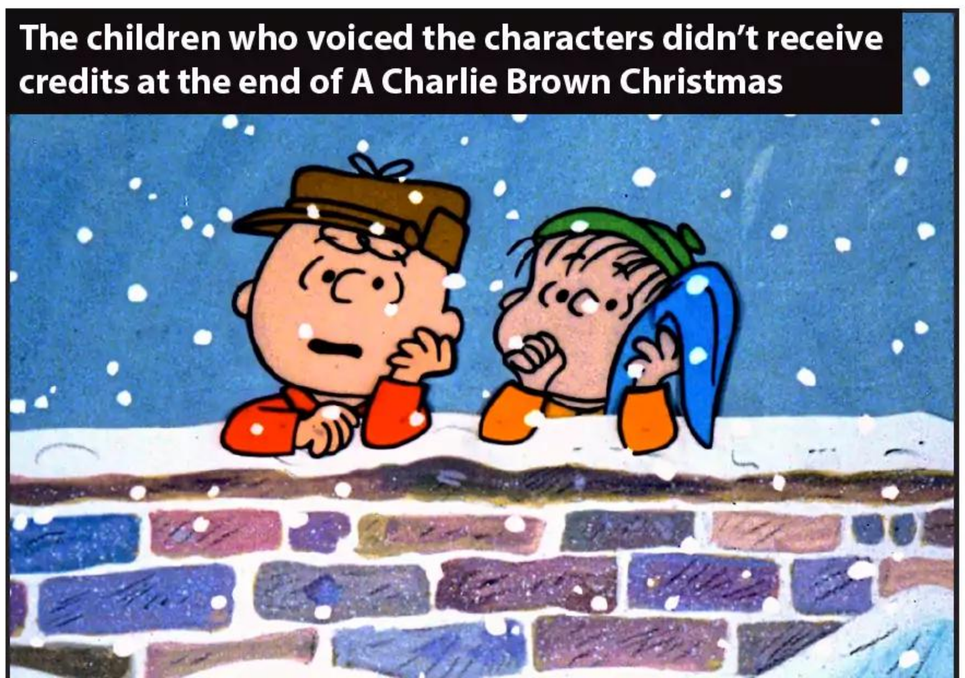
Minor characters included the piano-playing Schroeder (who first appeared in 1951), Pig-Pen, who was always dirty and surrounded by clouds of dust (1954) and Linus and Lucy's younger brother, Rerun (1973) who as a baby was often seen riding in the back of his mother's bike. Charlie Brown also developed a romantic fixation on the Little Red-Haired Girl who only appeared occasionally. No adults ever appeared in the strip and none of the characters ever grew up. In the TV cartoons a series of unintelligible discordant musical notes was deployed to indicate when an adult (usually a parent or teacher) was speaking off camera.

The tomboyish, freckly Peppermint Patty (1966) proved to be another popular character. Patty always referred to Charlie Brown as 'Chuck' and clearly had a crush on him. Never very academic, she was thoroughly confused by the existence of Snoopy who she thought of as a 'funny looking kid' apparently not realising he was a dog. Patty was later joined by the bespectacled Marcie (1971) who followed Patty everywhere and, much to her annoyance, always addressed her as 'Sir'.

MORE THAN PEANUTS

The success of Peanuts was further boosted by the popularity of the TV versions of the strip. By the end of the 20th Century, the concept had become a vast media empire of books, comics, TV shows, toys and merchandise earning more than a $1 billion. Schultz himself ended up drawing a total of 17,897 published Peanuts strips and earned around $30-$40 million a year throughout the Nineties. With one notable exception, he never took a holiday. Reruns of old Peanuts cartoons appeared during the five-week break Schultz took to celebrate his 75th birthday in 1997.

Schultz died, following a heart attack, at the age of 77 in 2000. He had been keen for Peanuts to die with him and, in fact, the final strip ran the following day. TV and film versions continue to be made however, and with a substantial archive of half a century's worth of Peanuts comic strips still freely available to read and enjoy, the names Charlie Brown and Snoopy are unlikely to be forgotten any time soon.



The children who voiced the characters didn't receive credits at the end of A Charlie Brown Christmas

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1988, two armed gunmen, attracted by Schultz's vast fortune, attempted to kidnap his wife, Jean. Happily, the attempt was a failure and the gunmen fled, leaving Charles and Jean Shultz unhurt.

Who killed the m

Known in Hollywood as a 'good-time girl', Cynthia Bouron crossed the wrong person – and paid a terrible price

The 1970 Honorary Oscar, presented by Frank Sinatra, was Cary Grant's only Academy Award

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1966 Miloš landed roles in two movies, billed as Milos Milos – The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming and Incubus, alongside a young William Shatner.

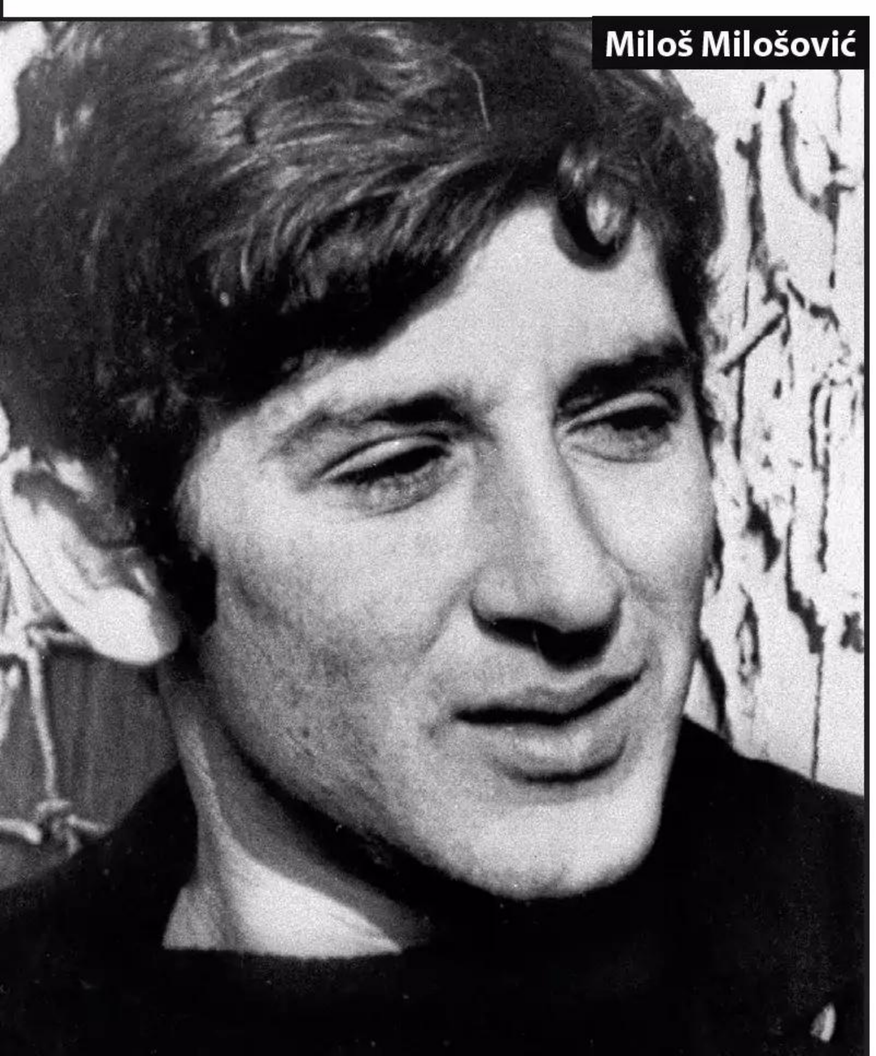
erry widow?

Waiting backstage at the 42nd Academy Awards ceremony on 7 April 1970, Cary Grant was nervous. The suave 66-year-old actor, who had been nominated for an Oscar twice but never won, was about to be presented with an Honorary Award by Frank Sinatra. But Cary wasn't just anxious about stepping out in front of a glittering assembly of his peers. There was something else playing on his mind. Would a woman stride on stage and hand him a subpoena?

The woman Cary Grant feared would turn up was Cynthia Bouron. The previous year, she had announced to the press that she was pregnant with Cary's child. Reportedly mortified and keen to quash any publicity, Cary had paid Cynthia's maternity expenses. In March of 1970, Cynthia had given birth to a girl, naming her Stephanie Andrea Grant on the birth certificate.

Much to Cary's relief, the presentation of the award went smoothly. However, the following month, Cynthia filed a paternity suit, asking for 'reasonable support'. Cary demanded blood tests to prove paternity but Cynthia refused. The case was eventually dropped, yet Cynthia continued to tell the press that Cary Grant was her daughter's father. Would there ever be an end to it?

The answer to that question was 'yes'. Three years later, on 30 October 1973, Cynthia Bouron was found dead – and in horrific circumstances.



Miloš Milošović

RITUAL KILLING

Customers at the Market Basket supermarket in Los Angeles noticed a strange smell coming from a car in the parking lot. When the police opened the boot, they found Cynthia's body.

Investigators believed the 39-year-old mum of three had lain in the boot of her car for around 10 days. Cynthia had been reported missing by her two teenage sons, who hadn't seen her for several days.

Aside from the devastation at losing their mother, the boys must have been sickened by the way she was killed. Cynthia had been beaten up and bound in the manner of 'incaprettamento' – a ritual method of strangulation typically used by the Mafia to send out a chilling message to others – if you cross us, you will face the consequences.

But who had Cynthia Bouron crossed? What would lead to such a gruesome death?

Born in New York in 1934, Cynthia Louise Krensky grew up in Chicago. In her teens she studied in Paris, where she met Robert Bouron, a dentistry student. The pair married in 1956 and had two sons, Eric and Marc.



Cynthia's killer was never found

However, Cynthia wasn't cut out for the humdrum life of a dentist's wife. She had always been fascinated by the glamour of Hollywood. In 1964, the lure of the movie capital proved just too irresistible and she moved to Los Angeles. Now divorced from Robert, it was here that Cynthia became involved with the man who would introduce her to the seedier side of the movie industry. Serbian Miloš Milošović was a handsome tough guy. He and his friend Stefan Marković had allegedly been gangsters and street fighters in Belgrade.

The two men were employed as bodyguards by the French film star Alain Delon – though it was rumoured their duties also included procuring women for 'entertainment'. When Delon moved to the US Miloš went with him, fostering ambitions to be a star himself.

UNDERWORLD LINKS

It is unknown how Cynthia came into contact with Miloš, but she was immediately captivated by the charismatic Serbian. The pair were soon wed, though their volatile relationship often led to blazing rows. In 1965, just a year into their marriage, Cynthia filed for ➤

divorce after Miloš was arrested for assaulting her.

Cynthia would later claim she only married Miloš to save him from deportation to his homeland, where he faced a 15-year prison sentence for army desertion. There were also rumours that she was paid a five-figure sum to marry him.

Miloš immediately took to the party scene, mixing with Hollywood's A-listers, thanks to his friendship with Alain Delon. That same year, he began a torrid affair with Barbara Ann Thomason, the estranged fifth wife of film star Mickey Rooney. When Barbara started talking about giving her marriage to Rooney another go, Miloš took it badly – very badly. On 31 January 1966, he shot Barbara dead in the bathroom of Rooney's house, then killed himself with a bullet to the temple. It looked like a tragic case of murder/suicide. However, there were rumours that Miloš's underworld connections had made him a target for the Mafia. Was it in fact a double murder?

PARTY GIRL

Following the death of her husband in such shocking circumstances, Cynthia found herself the focus of intense media attention – and she revelled in it. Soon the 'merry widow' was appearing in gossip columns described as an actress, a showgirl, a model, even a producer. However, others on the party circuit described her in less glowing terms – a call girl, a hanger-on, a celebrity groupie.

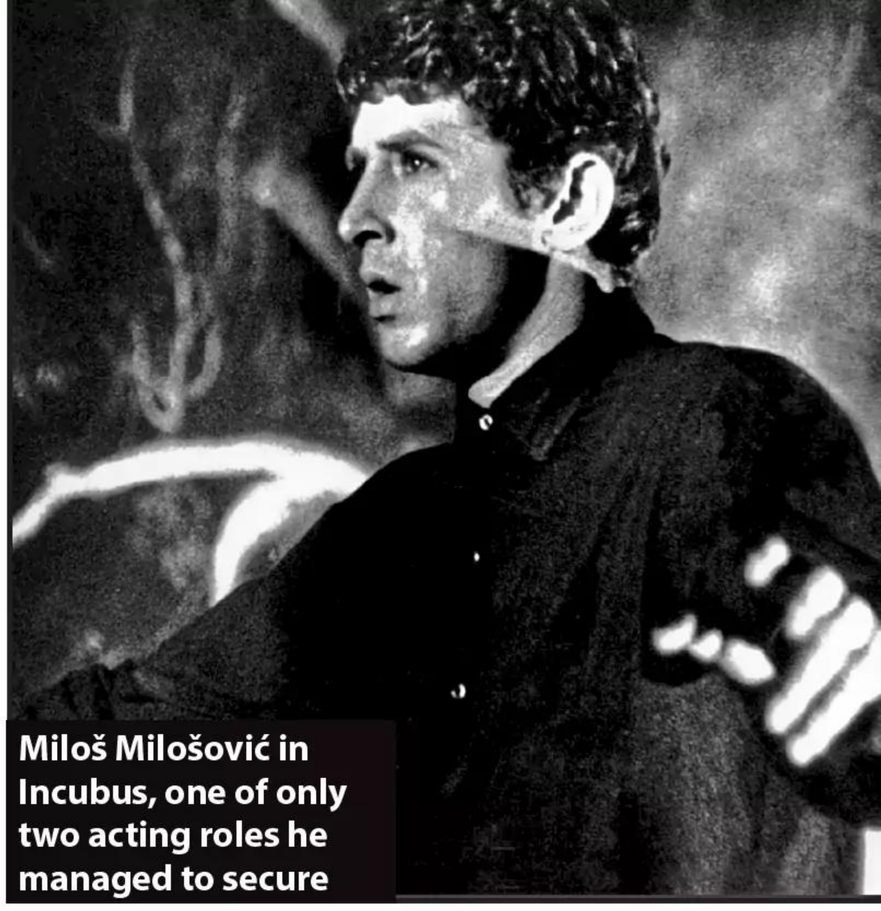
She was said to have had affairs with some of Hollywood's biggest names, such as Frank Sinatra, Jerry Lewis and Omar Sharif. And then there was Cary Grant. She allegedly had a short-lived fling with him in Las Vegas in 1969.

Cynthia was living life to the full, but some of the people she was mixing with were undoubtedly inhabitants of Tinseltown's underworld. Was someone from her late husband's shady background involved in her Mafia-style death?

In 1968, Miloš's friend Stefan Marković was found shot dead near a Paris rubbish dump. Like Cynthia, five years later, he had been bound in the manner of incaprettamento. His murder, also like Cynthia's, was never solved.

Now, more than 50 years later, Cynthia's daughter Stephanie accepts that Cary Grant wasn't her father. However, she does believe that, in the weeks before her mother's killing, Cynthia knew she was in danger, sending Stephanie away to stay with a family friend. Was Cynthia trying to protect her little girl?

Cynthia Bouron was attracted by the glitz and glamour of Hollywood. Unfortunately, she was also attracted to the wrong sort of men – and it cost her dearly.



Miloš Milošović in Incubus, one of only two acting roles he managed to secure



Cary Grant's only child was daughter Jennifer with his fourth wife Dyan Cannon

The Hatchet in the hat

For more than three decades Hedda Hopper ruled Hollywood with ink, outrage and a wardrobe of flamboyant hats. Priyanca Rajput reveals how she turned gossip into power



Hedda Hopper's gossip column did not merely report the news, it created it. Careers could rise or crumble overnight while reputations were sanctified or destroyed, leaving no star, director or studio mogul safe from her gaze. Hopper wielded scandal as both spectacle and weapon, turning morality, patriotism and personal vendettas into front-page drama during the Golden Age of Hollywood.

Born Elda Furry in Pennsylvania, Hopper arrived in Hollywood in 1916, with ambitions as an actress. She appeared in more than 100 silent films but never rose beyond supporting roles. By the mid-Thirties, financial pressures pushed her towards journalism, but her years in the studio system had gifted her access to Hollywood's inner circles.

In 1938, she launched her syndicated gossip column in the Los Angeles Times, quickly reaching millions of readers. ➤

DID YOU KNOW?

On release of her book The Whole Truth and Nothing But the Truth in 1964, Hopper was sued by Michael Wilding over implications that he was a homosexual. The suit was eventually settled for $100,000.

Her first major scoop, the romance between Clark Gable and Carole Lombard, heralded the arrival of a columnist who could shape careers with a single paragraph.

Hopper's influence was undeniable, with her column reaching an estimated 75 million readers at its peak. Her signature style, characterised by flamboyant hats and a commanding presence, became synonymous with Hollywood gossip.

'Few people have frightened Hollywood as much as Hedda Hopper,' noted Vanity Fair. 'The imperious, conservative gossip queen (and hat obsessive) who dug up dirt on all of the industry's biggest stars. Her ability to shape public perception was unparalleled, turning her column into a powerful tool that could elevate or destroy careers.'

WELLES AND BEYOND

Hopper's feud with Orson Welles remains one of Hollywood's most notorious. She portrayed Welles's Citizen Kane (1941) as a personal and moral attack on press magnate William Randolph Hearst, and her columns depicted Welles as arrogant, unpatriotic and dangerous. She published scathing critiques of his behaviour on set, questioned his loyalty to American values, and urged her readers to shun his work.

Her appetite for scandal extended across all Tinseltown, with high-profile character assassinations levelled at Charlie Chaplin, Elizabeth Taylor and Ingrid Bergman, demonstrating her capacity to shape public perception and turn private matters into front-page drama. The gossipmonger spotlighted Elizabeth Taylor's early romances, turning the young starlet's private affairs into headline drama and placing her morality under relentless public scrutiny. She also turned Ingrid Bergman's out-of-wedlock pregnancy into front-page scandal, making the actress's private life a spectacle for the nation to debate. She never hesitated to leverage her syndicated platform to mould public sentiment, ensuring that her personal judgments carried national reach.

Helen Mirren, who portrayed Hopper in 2015's Trumbo, spoke about the columnist's reach, telling The Hollywood Reporter, 'She had a huge power over the box office, much more than anyone nowadays. She saw herself as a patriot. She loved, above all, America.'

THE STARS SHE RAISED

There were a few stars who benefited from her input. By the mid-Forties, Joan Crawford's career had weathered the ups and downs of the studio system, but Hopper's promotion of her performance in Mildred Pierce (1945) helped cement her status as one of Hollywood's most formidable talents. It's this sustained coverage that's widely credited with helping Crawford secure the Academy Award for Best Actress.

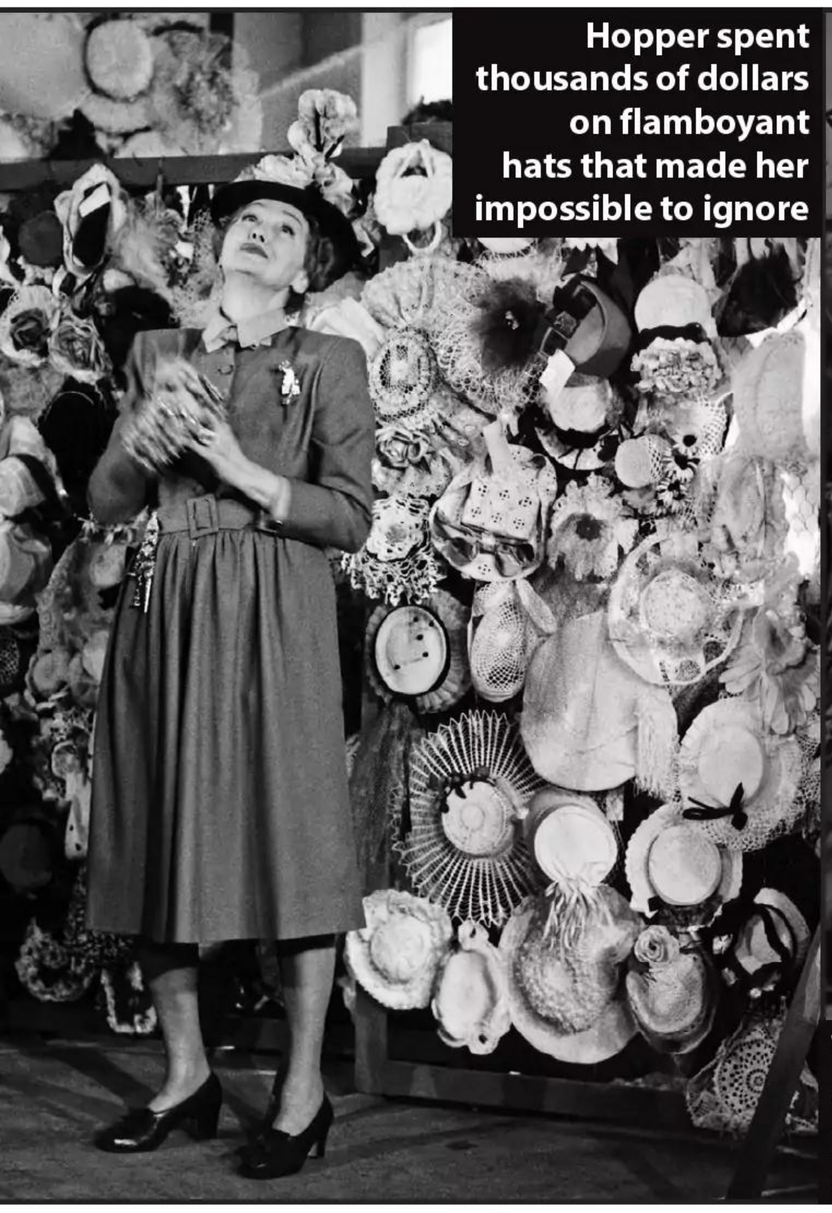
But Hopper's support was strategic; by championing Crawford, she reinforced her authority as an arbiter of taste and morality, a reminder that stars could rise only so long as they remained on her good side.

The notorious writer also played a pivotal role in shaping the early career of Mamie Van Doren. The young starlet faced intense competition in a system that favoured established names. Hopper recognised Van Doren's charisma and screen presence and used her column to spotlight her auditions, screen tests and early roles. This visibility accelerated Van Doren's rise, translating directly into studio contracts and film appearances





From Disney to Tallulah Bankhead, stars knew it paid to stay on the right side of Hedda



Hopper spent thousands of dollars on flamboyant hats that made her impossible to ignore



We can only imagine the awkward conversation taking place between Hopper, Agnes Moorehead and Orson Welles

that might otherwise have taken years to secure.

Hopper's strategic favouritism demonstrated that her power extended beyond scandal. She was a gatekeeper of fame and fortune, capable of making careers with her praise as easily as she could destabilise them with her scrutiny. In Golden Age Hollywood, Hopper's columns were instruments of influence, shaping which actresses triumphed and which were consigned to obscurity.

RIVALRY, POWER & LEGACY

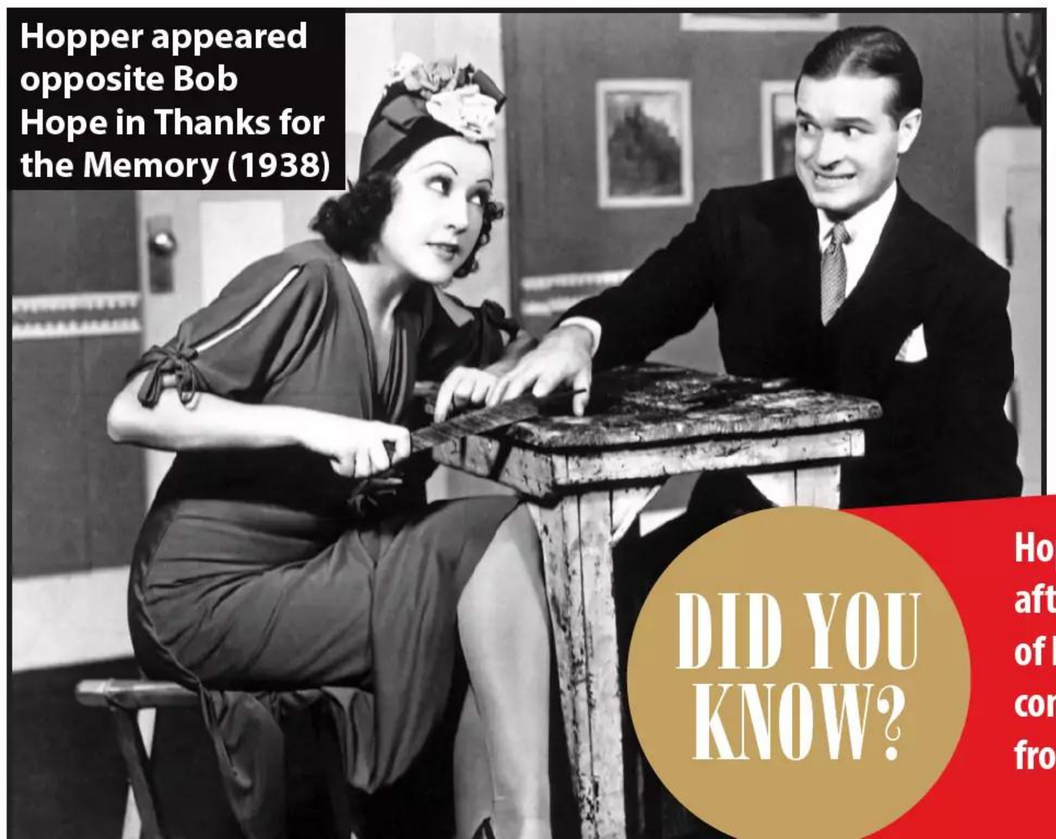
Hopper often framed personal vendettas as moral crusades. Adultery, illegitimacy and alleged political radicalism were condemned selectively, elevating favoured individuals while destroying others under the guise of protecting American values. Her columns could influence awards, box office returns and public opinion, cementing her ability to weaponise morality.

During the early Cold War, America feared communist infiltration and Hopper became a central figure in enforcing ideological conformity, using her column to amplify accusations of communist sympathies and blacklisting those deemed dangerous. Dalton Trumbo, one of the most prominent screenwriters of the era, was among her highest-profile victims with Hopper urging audiences to boycott his films.

Charlie Chaplin too faced intense scrutiny for alleged communist sympathies, and Hopper's columns highlighted his behaviour and beliefs, contributing to him being denied re-entry to the US in 1952.

Hopper's influence was magnified by her rivalry with fellow columnist Louella Parsons. Once friends, the two became bitter competitors, frequently one-upping each other in pursuit of exclusives. Studios exploited this competition, granting one or the other privileged access, intensifying the stakes.

But by the Sixties, the studio system was collapsing, and television and changing tastes began to diminish Hopper's sway. Yet she continued writing and socialising until her death in 1966, leaving a legacy as a trailblazer for female influence handled with ruthless efficiency. Through her columns, Hopper codified a system where Hollywood's public morality, private scandals and political loyalties could be enforced by a single, powerful voice, an architect of reputations, careers and sometimes ruin.



Hopper appeared opposite Bob Hope in Thanks for the Memory (1938)

DID YOU KNOW?

Hopper had a public spat with Joseph Cotten in 1943 after she reported he had been caught in the back seat of his car with teenage star Deanna Durbin. After he confronted her he received congratulatory telegrams from fellow stars who admired his courage.



RED DUST (1932)
Fresh from the real-life scandal of her husband being found dead in mysterious circumstances, Jean Harlow bears all (skinny dipping in a rain barrel) as a prostitute caught in a hot and steamy love triangle with Clark Gable and Mary Astor. The film helped cement Harlow and Gable as two of the Thirties' biggest sex symbols and earned MGM its highest grossing picture of the year. In 1953 Gable starred in the film's somewhat tame Technicolor remake, Mogambo, opposite Grace Kelly and Ava Gardner.

Hollywood's naughtiest

Before the Production Code was enforced in 1934, Hollywood entered its most audacious era, unabashedly showcasing sex, nudity, scandal and bad behaviour on the big screen



BABY FACE (1933)

After years of being pimped by her father, Lily (Barbara Stanwyck) heads to New York with the clear intention of sleeping her way to the top. 'Yeah, I'm a tramp,' Lily says to her father, 'And who's to blame? ... A swell start you gave me. Ever since I was 14, what's it been? Nothing but men! Dirty rotten men! And you're lower than any of them. I'll hate you as long as I live!'. A young John Wayne is one of her many lovers.



I'M NO ANGEL (1933)

Already infamous after serving jail time for indecency, Mae West penned this story of a circus performer with a voracious appetite for men. Censors took issue with the provocative song lyrics and innuendo-laden dialogue such as 'When I'm good, I'm very good. But when I'm bad I'm better,' and 'It's not the men in your life that counts, it's the life in your men.' Cary Grant plays the thoroughly smitten Jack Clayton.



THREE ON A MATCH (1932)

As far as the censors were concerned this film has it all: adultery, drunkenness, drug addiction, blackmail, kidnap, murder and suicide. Bette Davis, Joan Blondell and Ann Dvorak are childhood friends who risk bad luck by lighting three cigarettes together during a reunion. Look out too for Humphrey Bogart playing a gangster for the first time.



DESIGN FOR LIVING (1933)

Based on a celebrated stage play by Noël Coward, the story follows free-spirited Gilda (Miriam Hopkins) who, unable to choose between suitors Tom and George (Fredric March and Gary Cooper), agrees to live together as a threesome. The film may have toned down the homosexual subtexts of the original but the fact that Gilda is the driving force behind the salacious set-up made it all the more shocking.

NIGHT NURSE (1931)

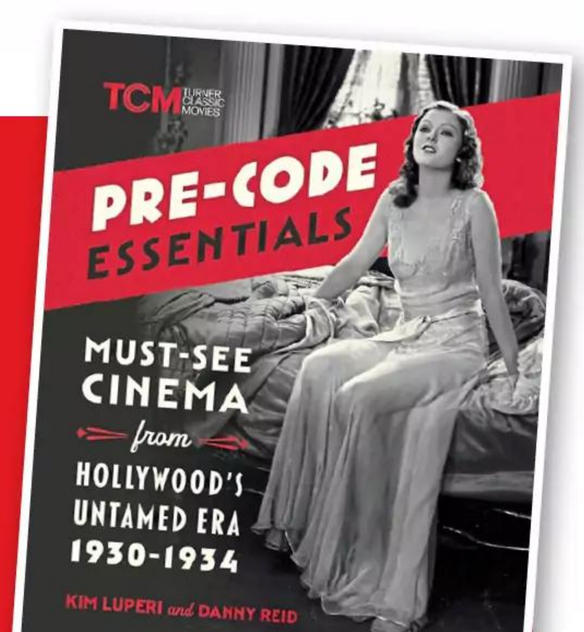
Newly qualified nurse Lora (Barbara Stanwyck) uncovers a plot to harm the children she cares for. While the family's malevolent chauffeur (Clark Gable) plans murder, Lora joins forces with a kindly bootlegger Mortie (Ben Lyon) to foil his plans. Stanwyck plays a tough dame, not afraid to take a few knocks, but also not shy of stripping down to her undies with seemingly little provocation.





TARZAN AND HIS MATE (1934)

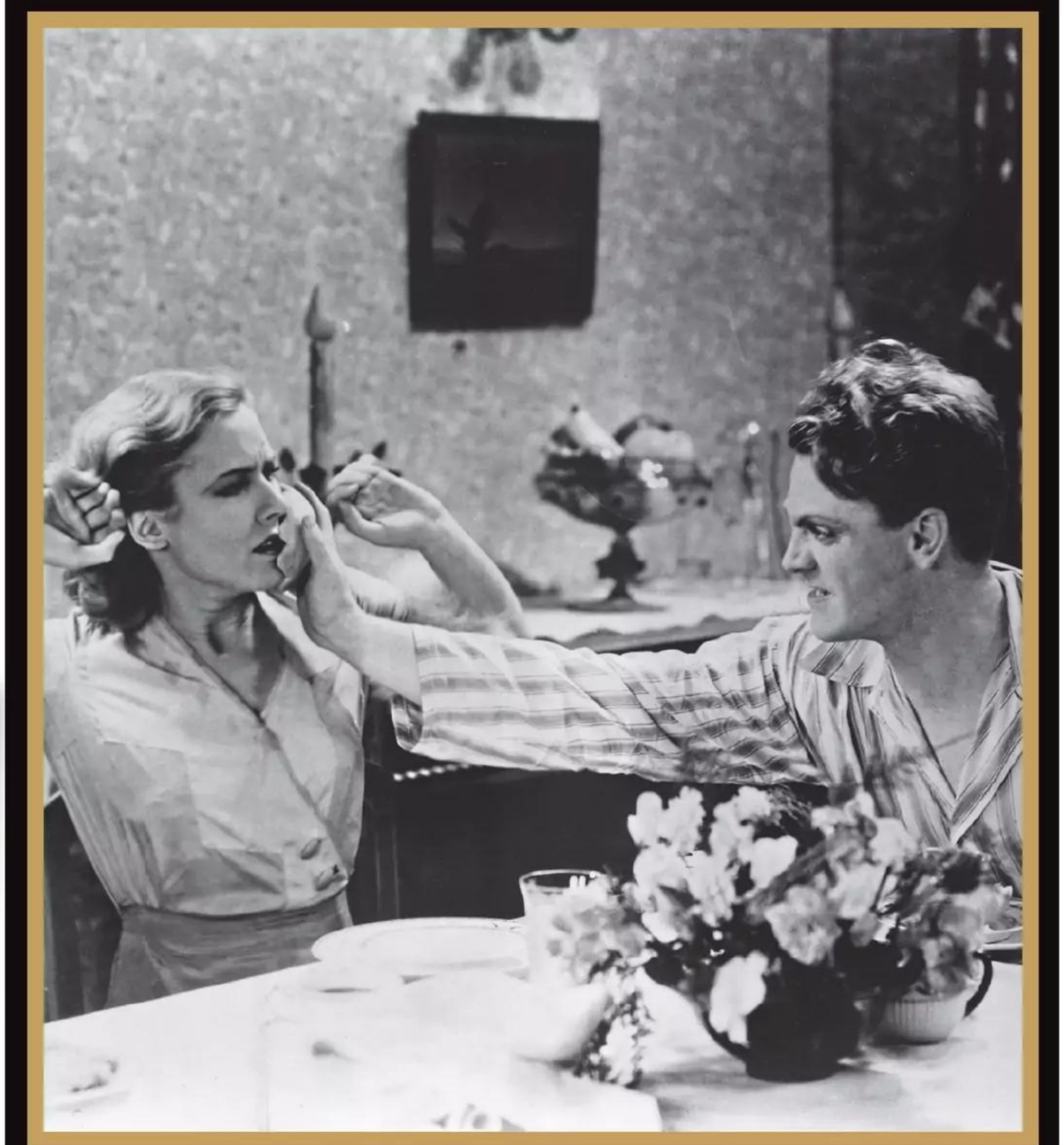
While the world was in the grip of Tarzan-mania, Hollywood was keen to capitalise on the success of Tarzan the Ape Man (1932). A key part of the next film in the series was to ramp up the ape man's risqué relationship with Jane (Maureen O'Sullivan). The sequence where the couple swim almost naked was reported to be, 'very daring and almost took away the audiences' breath'.



For more from this wild and wonderful time in Hollywood history check out Pre-Code Essentials: Must-See Cinema from Hollywood's Untamed Era, 1930-1934 by Danny Reid and Kim Luperi (Running Press, £22)

THE PUBLIC ENEMY (1931)

Who could have guessed that smashing a grapefruit into Mae Clarke's face would be the thing to make James Cagney a household name? Some of the censors weren't as concerned about the violence as they were by the characters' pyjamas, which they felt clearly implied the unmarried couple had spent the night together.



The man in the Santa suit

Edmund Gwenn wasn't the first choice to play Kris Kringle in Miracle on 34th Street, but his Oscar-winning performance helped create a timeless Christmas classic. Allan Hunter salutes his long career



Edmund Gwenn was almost 70 when he secured his place in movie history as Kris Kringle in the Christmas classic Miracle on 34th Street (1947). His impish charm, benign presence and twinkling eyes made him the perfect embodiment of the department store Santa Claus who might just be the real ➤

DID YOU KNOW?

Gwenn's ashes were long thought to have been misplaced until their discovery in March 2023. A GoFundMe campaign financed a final resting place in the Cathedral Mausoleum at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery.

deal. Co-star Maureen O'Hara later wrote, 'I've never seen an actor more naturally suited for a role'.

Twentieth Century Fox had originally offered the part to Gwenn's cousin and fellow character actor Cecil Kellaway who turned it down, later telling his son, 'Americans don't go for whimsy.' How wrong he was. Gwenn made the role his own by playing it seriously and avoiding any sense of lazy cliché. His Santa was kind, warm-hearted and wise, especially when challenged by the cynicism of a doubting young girl

Gwenn brought a lifetime of experience to bear on Miracle on 34th Street. He was born Edmund Kellaway in London on 26 September 1877. His civil servant father expected him to follow in his footsteps and was horrified when he chose acting as his profession, calling the theatre 'that sink of iniquity'. Gwenn made his stage debut in 1895 and his first West End appearance followed in A Jealous Mistake in 1899.

He married former child actress Minnie Terry, niece of the celebrated Ellen Terry, in 1901 but it was to prove shortlived. Edmund never remarried and always remained on good terms with his ex-wife. In 1956, he told one British journalist, 'I never married again because I was very happy with my wife. I simply stayed faithful to the memory of that happiness.' In later years, he shared his Beverly Hills home with British bobsledder Rodney Soher who won a silver medal at the 1924 Winter Olympics.

NO LEADING MAN

Gwenn's career flourished and he became a particular favourite of playwright George Bernard Shaw, appearing in the earliest production of Shaw's Man and Superman (1905) and subsequent stagings of Captain Brassbound's Conversion, Major Barbara and The Devil's Disciple.

During the First World War, he served as a captain in the British Army. He resumed his acting career, making his American stage debut in A Voice for the Minaret (1921). He once said he was 'always short and stocky, and not a particularly handsome thing. I could never play romantic leads.' His sheer talent, though, won him a stage career that encompassed the classics from Shakespeare to Ibsen and Chekov.

His Hollywood career began as Katharine Hepburn's crooked father in Sylvia Scarlett (1935). He would become a reliable scene-stealer showing his versatility as the bowler-hatted assassin in Alfred Hitchcock's Foreign Correspondent, Mr Bennett in Pride and Prejudice (both 1940) and the impoverished owner of the famous collie in Lassie Come Home (1943).

Miracle on 34th Street began in the mind of writer Valentine Davies who lamented the commercialisation of the festive season and wondered what Santa Claus would make of it all. He developed an idea with director George Seaton for a screenplay entitled The Big Heart and then It's Only Human before they settled on Miracle on 34th Street. Twentieth Century Fox boss Darryl Zanuck had little faith in a project he dismissed as 'corny' and only agreed to a modest budget if Seaton committed to directing future Fox films.

The film would shoot exterior scenes in New York and interiors in Hollywood. Filming was under way by November 1946 so that Gwenn could play Santa Claus in the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. The biggest crowd scenes were filmed during the real parade.



Apparently Edmund was so nice on set that Natalie Wood was totally convinced he really was Santa Clause – until she saw him out of costume at the film wrap party



Edmund played Rowlie Palmer in Lassie Come Home. Pal, who played Lassie earned a salary of $250 a week, while Elizabeth Taylor earned $100. We imagine Edmund earned a lot less than either of them!





Giant mutant killer ants were the horror monsters Gwenn faced in Them!



George Seaton and Edmund Gwenn receive their Oscars from Anne Baxter. Unusually, two Christmas films had been nominated for best picture that year, Miracle on 34th Street and The Bishop's Wife starring Cary Grant

The cast would include Maureen O'Hara, John Payne, Thelma Ritter in her film debut and Natalie Wood as the girl who doubted the existence of Santa Claus.

FAME AT LAST

O'Hara recalled the filming in her autobiography 'Tis Herself, 'Each evening, when we were not working, Edmund Gwenn, John and I went for a walk up Fifth Avenue. We stopped and window-shopped at all the stores, which were beautifully decorated for the holidays. Edmund especially loved those nights and acted more like the kid who might be getting the presents instead of the Santa who would be giving them. I got such a big kick out of seeing the expression of window dressers when they saw Edmund peering in at them – I knew then that he was going to make a big splash as Santa Claus.'

Gwenn wanted to do everything he could to make himself physically convincing as Santa Claus. He was said to have taken some inspiration from Clement Moore's The Night Before Christmas in which Santa 'had a broad face and a little round belly/That shook when he laughed like a bowl of jelly'. There would be no padding and no fake beards for Gwenn. He gained 30lb for the role and let his snowy-white beard grow out. When Natalie Wood tugs on his whiskers it is Gwenn feeling the pain.

Zanuck's lack of faith in Miracle on 34th Street resulted in the film being dumped in cinemas in June of 1947. Audiences flocked to it and drew it to their hearts, making it a huge box-office hit and a film that would become a Yuletide television perennial. It brought Gwenn a level of fame he had never previously known.

Gwenn worked continuously throughout the Fifties with highlights including his incorrigible counterfeiter in Mister 880 (1950), the creature feature Them! (1954) and Alfred Hitchcock's droll The Trouble with Harry (1955). He died of pneumonia on 6 September 1959, just a few weeks short of his 82nd birthday. Miracle on 34th Street would endear him to generations of filmgoers. It also earned him an Oscar as the year's Best Supporting Actor. When Anne Baxter announced his win, he walked to the stage, beaming at the audience before saying, 'Now I know there is a Santa Claus.'



Gwenn starred opposite John Forsythe, Shirley MacLaine and Mildred Natwick in Alfred Hitchcock's black comedy The Trouble with Harry

DID YOU KNOW?

Gwenn continued his Christmas connection with the television drama Heart of Gold (1952) in which he played a snowman who comes to life.

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

It's Christmas Eve 1951 and you are invited to the home of Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall for a glamorous black-tie celebration. Among the esteemed guestlist are Groucho Marx, Clifton Webb and Ethel Barrymore. Although the couple, who had been together since 1944, were very active on the Hollywood social scene, they generally preferred to spend the festive season as a family, with their young son Stephen, especially as Bogart's birthday was on Christmas day.

This year however, they opened their home to not only the Hollywood elite, but also renowned Life magazine photographer Slim Aarons, who snapped these rarely seen images.

Aarons, who had earned a Purple Heart as a combat photographer during the Second World War, gained a reputation for what he called, 'photographing attractive people, doing attractive things, in attractive places'. Aaron's approach was to shun the idea of stylists or elaborate lighting, instead preferring to photograph celebrities just as they were. He worked hard to become one of the 'in crowd' and put his subjects at ease. 'I knew everyone,' he explained later. 'They would invite me to one of their parties, because they knew I wouldn't hurt them. I was one of them.'



DID YOU KNOW?

Bogart and Bacall wouldn't have known at the time, but Lauren was in fact pregnant with their daughter, who was born the following August and named after Bogie's friend and fellow actor, Leslie Howard.

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Comedy historian Robert Ross pays tribute to some of the finest and funniest, but often overlooked, names in showbiz

Forgotten Heroes of Comedy...



The word 'prissy' could almost have been coined for ever-in-a-flap Franklin Pangborn. In trousers with a razor-sharp crease; invariably sporting a monocle; and with that pompous air of a New England millionaire, Pangborn never got the girl and never got the last laugh.

His snooty personality and killjoy attitude to life was pitted against Hollywood's favourite clowns and leading men throughout the Thirties and Forties. Poor but carefree Bing Crosby, crooning in his straw boater, was the epitome of what set Pangborn's characters on edge. The film was the 1933 short Sing, Bing, Sing, and that was exactly what Pangborn didn't want to hear!

'His snooty personality and killjoy attitude to life was pitted against Hollywood's favourite clowns'

Equally, ebullient and perpetually inebriated WC Fields, and knockabout goons The Ritz Brothers, were the perfect sounding board for Pangborn's flustered and fussy comic characters.

Skilled as harassed hotel desk clerks, petulant professors and demonstrative department store employees, Pangborn's roles were often uncredited and usually wrapped up in a scene or two. He learned his craft with various stock companies across America, making his stage debut at the age of 17. And for a solid 20 years, from starring in comic two-reelers, in 1926, through to playing a representative of his old boss, movie mogul Mack Sennett, in the nostalgia fest Down Memory Lane (1949), he was rarely out of work.

Pangborn was part of the reliable repertory company of sophisticated film-maker Preston Sturges, memorable as the pent-up radio announcer, Don Hartman, in Christmas in July (1940); the unreceptive reception committee chairman in Hail the Conquering Hero (1944), and – pretty much playing himself – opposite Harold Lloyd, in Mad Wednesday (1947).

Producer Hal Roach also relied on Pangborn's stock character, with his anger at life's little irritations even funnier when vented at the youthful cast of the Our Gang comedies. Pangborn too was perfect for the relentless, cartoon-like slapstick of Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson; and made a belated return to movies, as the Marquis de Varennes, in the ragbag history lesson The Story of Mankind (1957) – a film most notable for reuniting Groucho, Chico and Harpo Marx, only to plonk them down in three separate scenes!

Pangborn spent most of the Fifties as a frequent comic face on television, most often stooging for wild comedian Red Skelton. And it was on The Red Skelton Show, in April 1958, that Pangborn made his final appearance. He died that July, at his Laguna Beach home in California. He was 69 years old. Pangborn received his star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame a little late – in February 1960. Regardless, he'll always be part of that Hollywood moonshine from a quarter of a century earlier, looking on with a disapproving scowl as Fred and Ginger dance on air.

Visit the website of Robert Ross, Britain's Comedy Historian, at robertross.co.uk

MOVIE MASTERCLASS No.52

With two leads delivering beautifully restrained performances that echo through the decades, it's easy to see why Random Harvest (1942) remains one of MGM's most enduringly romantic tear-jerkers







Charles Rainier (Ronald Colman), a shell-shocked Army officer stricken with amnesia after the First World War, builds a new life with the compassionate Paula (Greer Garson). But fate intervenes and, following an accident, he recovers his memory but, in the process, forgets the life he's built with Paula. The bittersweet drama unspools as Charles's lost years and forgotten love haunt him, while Paula quietly endures, hoping he will remember her. MGM's Louis B Mayer had acquired the rights to James Hilton's 1941 best-selling novel and entrusted director Mervyn LeRoy with capturing Hilton's trademark blend of sentiment and emotional restraint.



Based at MGM's Culver City lot, LeRoy's team of designers and technicians crafted authentic English environments including the fictional town of Melbridge, Liverpool, London's Waterloo Station and Houses of Parliament, and the rural cottage where the couple find fleeting happiness. Known for being methodical and exacting LeRoy obsessed about period realism, even insisting on accurate British rail carriages and authentic signage. Heavy fog effects, essential to key scenes, forced the crew to work in humid, claustrophobic conditions.





More than 300 extras were fitted with elaborate period costumes to help conjure up Edwardian England. The California sunshine caused problems for actors dressed in layers of British tweed and wool. Production assistants had to run fans and Garson stood in front of ice blocks between takes to maintain her composure.

Susan Peters received her only Oscar nomination for her portrayal of Kitty. Three years after the film was released, she was paralysed from the waist down after being shot in a hunting accident. She tragically died in 1952, aged just 31.



The film was the second highest grossing picture MGM released in 1942 and earned seven Academy Award nominations, including Best Actor for Colman and Best Picture. During a 12-week exclusive run at Radio City Music Hall in New York demand for tickets was so great the box office had to open each morning at 7.45am.



Ronald Colman was able to use his own first-hand experience of the First World War. He served with the British Army and fought at the Battle of Ypres, during which he was wounded and exposed to mustard gas. He loved the film and, when shooting wrapped, he said, 'This is one picture I hate to finish!'



The sets, both exterior and interior, for Paula and Charles's cottage are the same ones used for Dally and Dan's cottage in Lassie Come Home (1943).

King of the mi

His show was one of the highlights of Saturday night TV, but fame took a heavy toll on Mike Yarwood, as Nick Smurthwaite reveals

The world is full of mimics but few are able to turn that talent into a 20-year career on primetime television. In the Seventies and Eighties Mike Yarwood was a household name whose TV variety shows regularly notched up viewing figures of 15 to 20 million. One of his Christmas specials reached a colossal 21.4 million viewers – a statistic unthinkable today.

His impressions of leading politicians of the day – notably Harold Wilson, Edward Heath, James Callaghan and Denis Healey – were so beloved that the people in question began to exploit them for their own public images. Wilson once said, 'It's no secret that Mike does me better than I do myself.'

But it was the top variety performers of the day – Frankie Howerd, Ken Dodd, Max Bygraves, Larry Grayson, Hughie Green, Bob Monkhouse et al – that Yarwood felt most at home with. They were the performers he grew up with, and his impressions were pinpoint accurate without being in the least bit unkind.

It was Yarwood's combination of acute observation and gentle ridicule that endeared him to Seventies audiences who had yet to be exposed to the hard-edged comedy of Spitting Image (1984-96), The Young Ones (1982-84) and Whoops Apocalypse (1982). It was also the guiding hand of Bill Cotton, the BBC's influential head of light entertainment, who chose



DID YOU KNOW?

A keen footballer in his youth, Mike Yarwood tried out for Oldham Athletic, and later became a director of Stockport County FC. He was appointed an OBE in Harold Wilson's resignation honours list in 1976.

mics



Doing his Jim Callaghan impersonation outside Number 10. Yarwood later admitted he found it more difficult to impersonate John Major and Tony Blair because they were 'nice guys'

Yarwood to be the cheerleader for inoffensive light entertainment, along with Morecambe and Wise and The Two Ronnies. They were a ratings-grabbing triumvirate that proved unbeatable.

This was the era of family viewing when light entertainment had to appeal across the generations, so nothing too naughty and definitely nothing likely to frighten the horses. Who better than the clean-cut chap from Cheshire, the man of a thousand voices, to brighten up everyone's Saturday evening?

A DARK TIME

What nobody knew until much, much later was that the rollercoaster ride he enjoyed for nearly two decades exacted a massive toll on the shy, self-effacing Yarwood, resulting in depression, panic attacks, alcoholism and divorce.

The constant pressure of coming up with new material and having to reinvent himself as other people, combined with his perfectionism and his need for alcohol to quell his nerves, made him extremely difficult to be around.

In a 2002 Heroes of Comedy documentary, his daughter Clare says of this time, 'There is a whole blurred period when it was at its worst and, after my parents split up it very much fell on the shoulders of Charlotte (her sister) and myself to support Daddy, because I think my mum had taken all she could at that point. So Charlotte and I became like parents to him and tried to help him through.'

In the same programme, Yarwood himself says, 'I look back (on the Seventies) with a lot of sadness and unhappiness. I was working too much and my drinking was out of control.'

At the peak of his success, Yarwood's use of props had been minimal – a pipe for Harold Wilson, glasses for Eric Morecambe, a fez for Tommy Cooper – always relying more on mannerisms and body language to evoke a well-known personality. But by the beginning of the Eighties, after he'd moved from the BBC to Thames Television, he became more reliant on wigs, make-up and costume, in the style of one-time rival, Stanley Baxter.

PROPS NOT REQUIRED

His producer John Ammonds tried to persuade Yarwood that he didn't need elaborate props to impress the viewing public. Ammonds told the writer Graham McCann, 'It was a confidence thing, I think. I told him it didn't matter, what mattered was how accurate is the voice, and how funny is the material. Stop worrying about the look. They indulged him far more at Thames than they had done at the BBC. They allowed him more and more time to fuss over getting the look right, and less and less time getting the voice right. He lost sight of, or lost belief in, what had made him so good and so special.'

In 1987, following one last Christmas special, Thames decided not to renew his contract. The arrival of the satirical Spitting Image in 1984 had made Yarwood look out of date. He reinvented himself two years later with a chat show for Grampian TV, broadcast but never networked, but it proved to be shortlived. In 1990 he had a heart attack at his home in Weybridge, Surrey, and gave up alcohol completely the following year. Towards the end of Nineties he underwent treatment for depression at the Priory Clinic.

Though his attempt to impersonate Margaret Thatcher in the Eighties had fallen flat, he fared better with her successor, John Major, in appearances on The Des O'Connor Show and the Royal Variety Performance, both in 1993. He also did a turn as the music hall comedian Max Miller in the BBC special, Call Up the Stars (1995), a recreation of a wartime concert. He was a guest on Have I Got News For You, and joined one of his old targets, Bob Monkhouse, for a televised chat in front of an audience of comedians and impressionists at the Albany Club.

Free of the trappings of stardom, Yarwood got his life and his family back. 'I'm sober and I'm happy,' he told one journalist. 'If I never step on the stage again, I've had a wonderful life.'

Happy birthday Corrie



Marking the 65th anniversary of the first episode of Coronation Street, we revisit 10 of the most iconic moments from the nation's favourite soap

IN THE BEGINNING...

The very first episode of Coronation Street was broadcast live at 7pm on Friday 9 December 1960. Just over 7.7 million viewers were introduced to the residents of the now famous Weatherfield street including, Elsie Tanner (Pat Phoenix) and her errant son Dennis (Philip Lowrie) at No.11, 21-year-old university student Ken Barlow (William Roache) at No.3, Annie Walker (Doris Speed) the Grand Dame of the Rovers Return Inn and, at No.1, loveable curmudgeon Albert Tatlock (Jack Howarth).

DID YOU KNOW?

Corrie creator Tony Warren was just 24 years old when he first proposed the idea for the long-running soap. After his death in 2016, Corrie star Helen Worth said, 'Tony was a genius of our time, the dearest, funniest and most inspirational man of his generation.'



DEIRDRE SAYS 'I DO'

The nation was gripped by wedding fever as we anticipated the nuptials of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer. But, just two days before the fairytale royal wedding another couple tied the knot in front of a record-breaking 15,350,000 viewers. For months Deidre Langton (Anne Kirkbride) had been torn between the excitement of Baldwin's Casuals boss Mike (Johnny Briggs) and safe-but-dull Ken. Eventually she made up her mind and, on 27 July 1981, she and Ken walked down the aisle.



BRADLEY BITES THE DUST

After months of terrorising Rita Fairclough (Barbara Knox), Alan Bradley's (Mark Eden) storyline came to a dramatic end on 8 December 1989. Rita had fled to Blackpool to try to escape his manipulation and abuse, but he tracked her down and, in a dramatic chase scene, is fatally struck by a tram. Eden enjoyed playing Alan but admitted he received sack loads of hate mail, and was once set upon in the street by 'an incensed lady with an umbrella'.



TEARS FOR STAN

Despite constant bickering and hardship, Stan (Bernard Youens) and Hilda Ogden's marriage was solid as a rock. They had a deep affection and enduring bond and that was never more obvious than after Stan's funeral. On 28 November 1984 we all wept with Hilda, clutching Stan's glasses and sobbing, as the reality of his death finally hit her. The scene brought the crew to tears and earned actress Jean Alexander a Royal Television Society award.



BYE-BYE BET

Landlady Bet Gilroy, nee Lynch, (Julie Goodyear) walked away from the Rovers Return pub on 16 October 1995. Determined to leave on her own terms, wearing her trademark leopard print coat, chandelier earrings and gravity-defying blonde beehive, it was an emotional farewell to a character we'd known and loved for almost 30 years.

THE WEATHERFIELD ONE

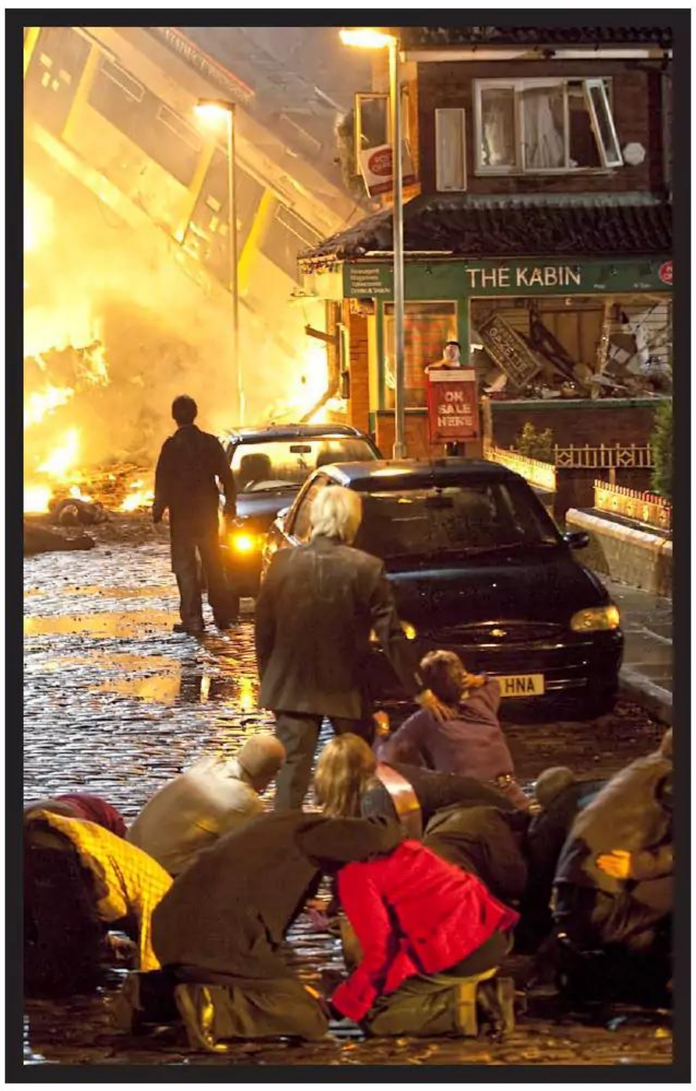
When Deirdre was wrongly convicted for fraud and sentenced to 18 months in prison on 29 March 1998, the public were outraged by the injustice and jammed the Granada TV switchboards. Tabloid newspapers began a campaign to 'Free the Weatherfield One!' and even Prime Minister Tony Blair got involved calling it a 'miscarriage of justice' and vowing to get Home Secretary Jack Straw to look into the matter. The storyline had been the culmination of a ratings war with rival soap EastEnders.





REIGN OF TERROR

The climax of a gripping storyline, which aired on 12 March 2003, marked the end of the road for one of soapland's greatest villains, Richard 'Tricky Dicky' Hillman (Brian Capron). Guilty of numerous crimes, including murder and kidnap, Hillman's most infamous deed turned out to be his swansong, when he drowned while trying to murder his wife Gail (Helen Worth) and her children, by driving them into the canal.



BLAZE OF GLORY

Viewers were stunned by the gripping, hour-long live broadcast on 9 December 2010, which marked the programme's 50th anniversary. The ambitious storyline saw chaos erupt as a viaduct collapsed, sending a tram plummeting onto the street below. Over 14 million tuned in to see popular characters fight for survival. Amid the carnage there were two fatalities. Molly Dobbs (Vicky Binns) died in the wreckage after confessing to an affair, while Ashley Peacock (Steven Arnold) perished after heroically helping others escape the devastated Corner Shop.

ON HER TERMS

Hayley Cropper (Julie Hesmondhalgh), loved by audiences for her warmth and kindness, was diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer in 2013. Facing a devastating prognosis and wanting to be in control of her ending, she decided to take her own life. In emotional scenes, on 20 January 2014, with her devoted husband Roy (David Neilson) by her side, Hayley drank a lethal concoction and passed away peacefully. Hesmondhalgh's dignified and poignant performance won numerous awards, while the writers were praised for their sensitive portrayal of terminal illness and for highlighting the right-to-die debate.





HITTING THE ROOF

The Underworld factory, owned by Carla Connor (Alison King), dramatically collapsed on 18 March 2018, killing Rana Habeeb (Bhavna Limbachia) on her wedding day. The disaster shocked Weatherfield's residents and tensions grew as suspicion fell on multiple characters who may have caused the accident.

Tiny Dancer

Famed for her 19in waist, Vera-Ellen was one of the few actresses to dance with both Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire. Simon Button chronicles her short but remarkable career



She performed elaborate dance sequences with Fred Astaire in Three Little Words

DID YOU KNOW?

Vera-Ellen's social circle in the Fifties included Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy. A lifelong Republican, she supported Reagan after he became US President.

She burned brightly for just 12 years, yet Vera-Ellen remains revered as one of the best dancers ever to grace the silver screen. No less a luminary than Rosemary Clooney saluted both her skills and her patience, reflecting on the time they learnt dance routines together in White Christmas (1954), 'She was patient with me. I would make mistakes and I felt very inadequate, and indeed I was.'

Clooney was, however, an accomplished singer, while Vera-Ellen's singing voice always had to be dubbed, leading Rosemary to add with a smile, 'If they could have dubbed my dancing, now, it would have been the perfect picture!'

Born in Norwood, Ohio, her full name was Vera-Ellen Rohe, but when she made it in showbusiness she dropped the surname and insisted on keeping the hyphen. 'I'm The Dash,' she joked about being labelled in an industry that pigeonholed performers with such monikers as The Body or The Voice. 'From my first contract on, I've had it written in that they cannot leave out the hyphen.'

That first contract came in 1939 when, at 18, she made her Broadway debut in the musical Very Warm for May. She'd been dancing from the age of nine, studying at the same studio as the young Doris Day (their parents would carpool to ferry the girls there and back) and recalling, 'I guess I was an awkward child and the family wanted me to be graceful. When I found out I liked to dance and people seemed to like to watch me, I was determined to go places. I don't remember if I liked it because I was good at it or if I was good at it because I liked it. Maybe a little of both.'



With Gene Kelly in On the Town. Vera-Ellen was an incredibly versatile performer, proficient in ballet, tap, jazz and acrobatic styles

Aged 13, she won the Major Bowes Amateur Hour radio talent contest, toured with the Ted Lewis Band, broke into Broadway musicals, then became one of the youngest-ever Rockettes at Radio City Music Hall. She was fired from the line-up after two weeks because she was too individual a dancer, noting later, 'I invariably kicked higher than anyone in line and of course that would never do.'

A curse in the chorus line, her individuality helped when she transitioned from stage to screen. Her first film saw her third-billed below Danny Kaye and Virginia Mayo in Wonder Man (1945) and, while her singing had to be dubbed by June Hutton, the film's producer Samuel Goldwyn gushed, 'She's radiant, buoyant, wholesome, energetic and ambitious.'

The trio were brought back for The Kid from Brooklyn (1946), then Vera-Ellen and Gene Kelly danced up a storm to the number Slaughter on Tenth Avenue in the Rodgers and Hart biopic Words and Music (1948).

MAKING IT BIG

She'd been initially reluctant, saying, 'At first I wasn't sure whether I should take it. I knew I could do the steps, but I was going to have to portray a girl who was a floozy. It shocked me a little, I'll admit.' But she worked hard with a dance coach and rehearsed with Kelly for six weeks for a routine that 'lasted exactly seven minutes on the screen, the greatest seven minutes of my professional life'.

She worked with Kelly again in On the Town (1949) as dream girl Ivy Smith aka Miss Turnstiles and the following year hoofed opposite Fred Astaire in Three Little Words, joining only a handful of actresses who got to dance with both Gene and Fred in movie musicals.

She and Fred were reunited in The Belle of New York (1952) and again in White Christmas. The latter remained her most



While Vera-Ellen played the younger of the Haynes sisters in White Christmas, she was seven years older than Rosemary Clooney

beloved film, although it has been overshadowed by rumours that the woman with the narrowest waist in Hollywood (19in, by her own declaration) had got so painfully thin she had to wear high collars to hide the damage done to her neck by anorexia. She never addressed rumours of an eating disorder, while friends and family members insisted they weren't true.

LOVES & LOSSES

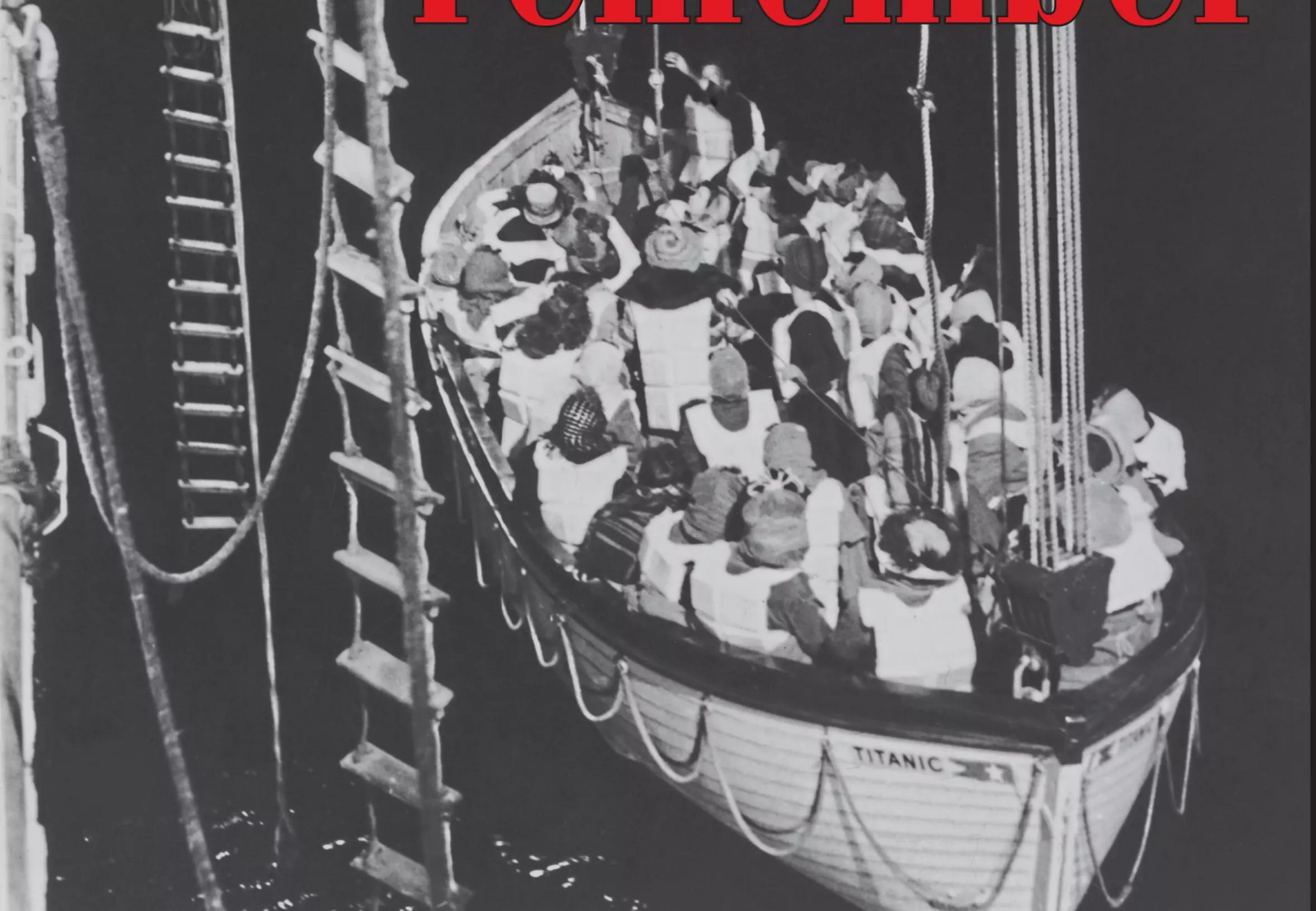
Vera-Ellen only made one more movie, namely Let's Be Happy (1957) and, after an appearance on The Perry Como show in 1959 she retired from showbusiness, saying, 'I stopped when I was ahead. I don't need my work any more and I don't need the applause.'

She was married twice, first to dancer Robert Hightower from 1941-46, then to oilman Victor Bennett Rothschild from 1954-66. She and Rothschild had a daughter, Victoria Ellen in 1963, but the child died three months later from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Friends said Vera-Ellen was devastated by the loss, although, as with the anorexia stories, she kept a public silence.

She worked to stay fit in her retirement, saying, 'On the days when I don't dance at the studio, I have to practise for at least an hour in the evening to keep in shape. Dancing is like breathing [and] missing a day doing either is very bad.' But sadly her life was cut short by ovarian cancer in 1981, when she died at just 60 years old.

He directed the most accurate of all the Titanic films, yet Roy Ward Baker is rarely given the credit he deserves. Charles Rollings takes a look at his long and varied career

A man to remember



DID YOU KNOW?

Shortly after Morning Departure (1950) was completed, the submarine HMS Truculent sank following a collision on the Thames, with the entire crew perishing. It almost led to the film being shelved, potentially ending Roy Baker's career.

Roy Ward Baker, as The Guardian remarked upon his death 15 years ago, had a 'rather quirky career for a very straightforward man'. For as well as directing A Night to Remember (1958) – the best film about the Titanic disaster – he made a camp Western, a lesbian vampire movie, and a transsexual version of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

But it would be wrong to assume he was attracted to off-beat subjects. Whether contract director or freelancer, Baker simply took what was offered and made the best of it. He was, above all, a craftsman.

'If I weren't a director,' he said, 'I would have been a very good cabinet maker. I like the detail and precision of that work.' His films are notable for their logical narratives, surface verisimilitude, attention to detail, crisp photography, fluid camerawork, unfussy editing, and for building tension in confined settings.

Born Roy Horace Baker on 19 December 1916, in Hornsey, north London, he was the only child of a Billingsgate fish merchant. His father frequented pubs patronised by cinema managers, from whom he wangled free tickets for his family. Captivated by the silver screen, Roy decided early on that his future lay in film. In February 1934, he joined Gainsborough Studios in Islington as a 'gofer', progressing to location scout and second-unit director, altogether working on 26 films.

Already familiar with French cinema and the theories of the Soviet filmmakers Pudovkin and Eistenstein, he learnt the most from watching Robert Stevenson direct the period drama Tudor Rose (1936); Carol Reed make Bank Holiday (1938), A Girl Must Live (1939) and Night Train to Munich (1940); and especially Alfred Hitchcock, whom he assisted on The Lady Vanishes (1938).

In 1940, he joined up, and three years later was posted to the Army Kinematograph Service (AKS) as a production manager. Hearing they were short of a director for their training films, he volunteered, eventually making six shorts and two series under the name Roy Baker – which he used until 1967.

One of his superiors was novelist Eric Ambler, who'd been asked to script and produce a film for Two Cities after the war and suggested Baker direct it. Ambler crafted an original screenplay, The October Man, which in 1947 became Baker's debut feature. It was a taut, atmospheric thriller, with John Mills – in the first of six outings for Baker – playing an amnesiac suspected of murder.

After this promising start, Baker's next two films flopped. He was distraught until suddenly being invited by producer Jay Lewis – another pal from the AKS – to direct Mills again in Morning Departure (1950). The screenplay concerned a Royal Navy submarine sunk by a mine, trapping a handful of survivors who must decide who should escape and who should stay. Baker directed it with documentary precision and skilfully conveyed the mounting tension.

Rank, which had now taken over Two Cities, rewarded him with Highly Dangerous (1950), a vehicle for Margaret Lockwood. Ambler again wrote the screenplay, with Lockwood playing an entomologist who enters an Iron Curtain country to determine whether insects are being used for biological warfare. Echoing The Lady Vanishes and Night Train to Munich (in both of which she'd starred), it seemed an anachronistic, tepid remake.

HOLLYWOOD BECKONS

But the success of Morning Departure led 20th Century-Fox to invite Baker to Hollywood. His joy soon evaporated when Jay Lewis claimed that he, not Baker, had really directed it. With his credentials in doubt, he was shipped back to England to remake the 1933 film Berkeley Square (re-titled I'll Never Forget You) as a romantic fantasy starring Tyrone Power. It was a silly film but didn't prevent Fox from asking him back to Hollywood to direct Don't Bother ➤



Roy directs Joan Greenwood and John Mills in The October Man



Marilyn Monroe was 26 when she starred in Don't Bother to Knock with Richard Widmark

to Knock (1952). Featuring Richard Widmark and Marilyn Monroe in her first co-starring role, it propelled her to top-billing.

Baker had success, too, with the 3-D thriller Inferno (1953). But after being replaced on White Witch Doctor (1953) by Henry Hathaway, at the insistence of its star, Susan Hayward, Baker came home.

None of the films he made at this juncture, again with Rank, enhanced his reputation, although all were well crafted. He sought refuge in television – as assistant director – but put thoughts of a permanent TV career on hold when he had two consecutive box-office hits, both based on fact.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

The One That Got Away (1957) followed the adventures of Franz von Werra, reputedly the only German POW to make a 'home run'. Baker insisted on a German star, Hardy Kruger, who was lambasted for 'sympathetically' portraying a Nazi so soon after the war. In fact, it was Baker's most ambivalent film: several lengthy scenes were devoted to undermining von Werra; only towards the end did he achieve heroic status, in a sequence where documentary realism gave way to nightmarish film noir.

Next came A Night to Remember (1958), based on Walter Lord's carefully researched book about the sinking in 1912 of Titanic.



A Night to Remember inspired James Cameron's Titanic (1997). He lifted ideas, plots, conversations and characters, including a minor character similar to the one played by Leonardo DiCaprio

Baker determined to depict the disaster faithfully, suggesting Ambler for the script, using authentic-looking sets, recruiting survivors as technical advisers, and constructing a coherent narrative with a huge cast of 92 speaking parts – and some 1500 extras.

It was a stupendous feat, making A Night to Remember the highlight of Baker's career.

In 1959 it won the Golden Globe for Best English-Language Foreign Film – and Rank promised Baker 'the top brick in the chimney'. Instead, they inflicted upon him



Hardy Kruger was only cast in The One That Got Away after Kenneth More and Dirk Bogarde turned the role down



Bette Davis was unhappy with the way The Anniversary was being directed, so Roy Ward Baker was brought in to replace the original director, Alvin Rakoff



Kenneth More played Second Officer Charles Lightoller, who survived the tragedy in real life

a script he'd already rejected: The Singer Not the Song (1961). The tale of a Mexican bandit and his strained relationship with a Catholic priest, it starred Dirk Bogarde and John Mills. Bogarde portrayed the bandit in tight, black leather trousers and deliberately camped it up. Mills starred again in Baker's final Rank film, Flame in the Streets (1961), one of the first British films to tackle racism – and as relevant today as it was then.

But the Bogarde vehicle was a critical and commercial disaster: it blighted Baker's career and caused Rank to cease making films. Baker now fully embraced television, where he spent much of the Sixties. His credits included 18 episodes of The Saint (1963-68), The Human Jungle (1964), Gideon's Way (1964-65) and The Avengers (1965-68). But tight budgets and shooting schedules meant sacrificing attention to detail, leading to many episodes being marred by continuity errors, the over-reliance on body doubles, and unsubtle acting.

TV HORROR

While working on The Saint, he became aware of another Roy Baker, a dubbing editor. Although lower in the pecking order, this Baker wouldn't change his name. Things came to a head when our Roy began receiving phone calls and visits from irate women trying to contact the other Roy. So, in 1967, he adopted his mother's maiden name 'Ward' as a middle name. When he made his first film for Hammer, the gripping Quatermass and the Pit (1967), he was billed as Roy Ward Baker.

After making The Anniversary (1968), an unpleasant black comedy starring Bette Davis, he went back to TV for occasional episodes of, among others, Department S, The Champions, and Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased) (all 1969). In the early Seventies he directed four episodes each of The Persuaders! and Jason King (both 1971-72).

In parallel, he continued working for Hammer – directing, with considerable aplomb, its first horror film with nudity, The Vampire Lovers (1970), which also featured a female vampire whose bite turns women into lesbians, and the gender-bending Doctor Jekyll and Sister Hyde (1971).

He then occasionally 'defected' to Hammer's cheapskate rival, Amicus, although it was at Hammer that his career reached its nadir with The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires (1974), after which he was unemployed for almost four years. Enter Robert S Baker, co-producer of The Saint, who in 1978 offered him two episodes of Return of the Saint. The tide really turned with Minder – dubbed the 'jewel in ITV's drama crown'. Baker was involved almost from the beginning, making 12 episodes and a feature-length instalment.

After another risible film for Amicus, he directed all seven episodes of hit series The Flame Trees of Thika (1981) before his last TV movie, the enjoyable Sherlock Holmes pastiche The Masks of Death (1984). Baker worked on four more TV series before retiring in 1992 and writing his memoirs, which were published in 2000 as The Director's Cut.

He died on 5 October 2010, aged 93. Fifteen years on, he remains underrated. But his best films have stood the test of time and even the lesser ones repay revisiting – and he deserves applause for The One That Got Away and treasuring for A Night to Remember.

DID YOU KNOW?

One of his biggest challenges in Hollywood was directing Marilyn Monroe in Don't Bother to Knock (1952). She fluffed her lines so often that he had to film many of her scenes separately.

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IT'S A FESTIVE CLASSIC BUT HOW MUCH DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT WHITE CHRISTMAS (1954)?

Are you a movie buff?







1 Who are the two male leads in White Christmas?
2 What are the names of the two sisters?
3 The song White Christmas originally appeared in which Bing Crosby film?
4 In which US state is the film set?
5 What is the name of the song-and-dance act formed by Bob and Phil?
6 Which actor performs the comedic dance number Choreography in the movie?
7 What do Bob and Phil do to help General Waverly save his inn?
8 Who directed White Christmas?

Who am I?

How many clues do you need to identify this star?

1 I was born Joseph Yule Jr. in Brooklyn, New York, in 1920, and appeared in vaudeville as a small child.

2 My breakthrough came as the title character in a long-running series of films about a spirited all-American boy.

3 I starred alongside Judy Garland in a number of upbeat MGM musicals during the Thirties and Forties.

4 My career spanned nearly 90 years, earning me two special Academy Awards and countless film credits.

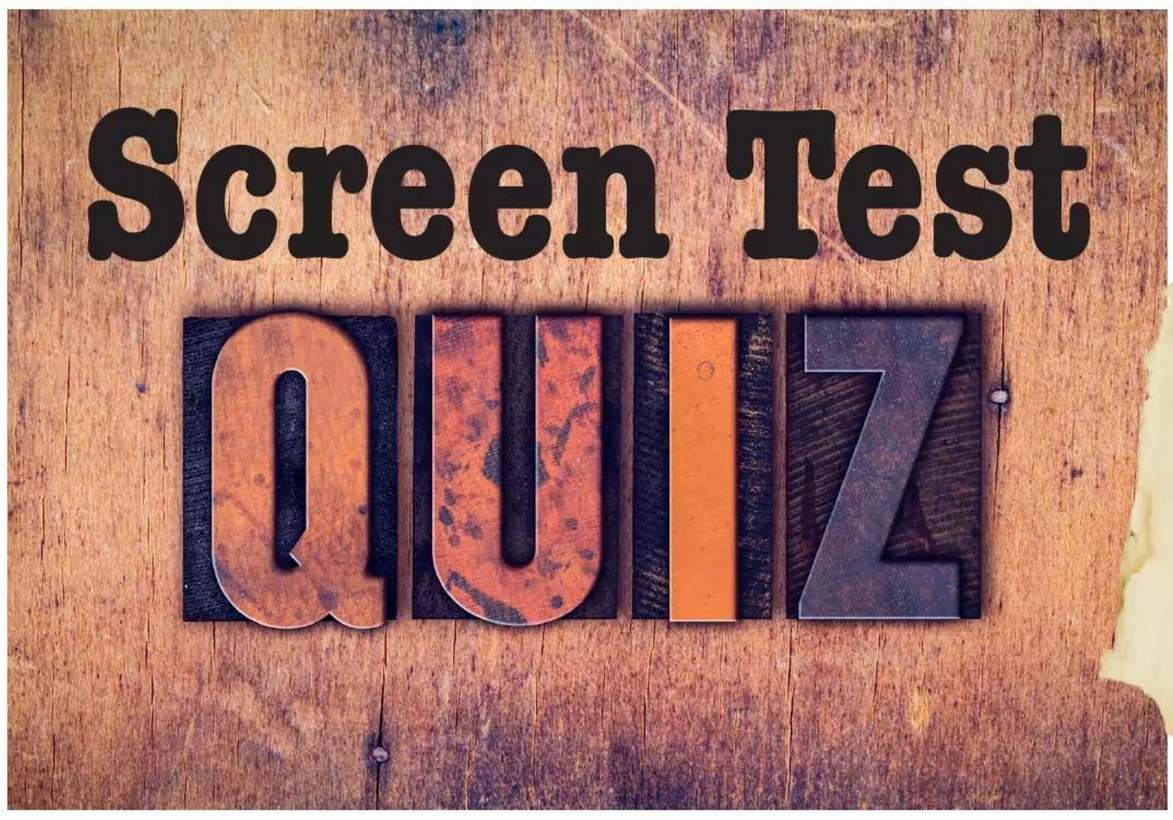
5 I am perhaps best remembered for playing Andy Hardy.

PIXELLATE

Who is Reginald Gardiner and Robert Shayne's dinner companion in this still from Christmas in Connecticut (1945)?



Time to test your film knowledge. It may be just for fun but pride is at stake…



IN A SPIN

Can you unravel these anagrams to reveal the titles of five Christmas films?

1 ABBEY IN DALTONS
2 HAN TRAMPETTE
3 CLINGER ADAPTS
4 HEAL ONEMO
5 HID DEAR

ANSWERS: ARE YOU A MOVIE BUFF? 1 Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye, 2 Betty and Judy Haynes, 3 Holiday Inn, 4 Vermont, 5 Wallace and Davis, 6 Danny Kaye, 7 They organise a Christmas show and invite their former Army unit to attend, 8 Michael Curtiz.

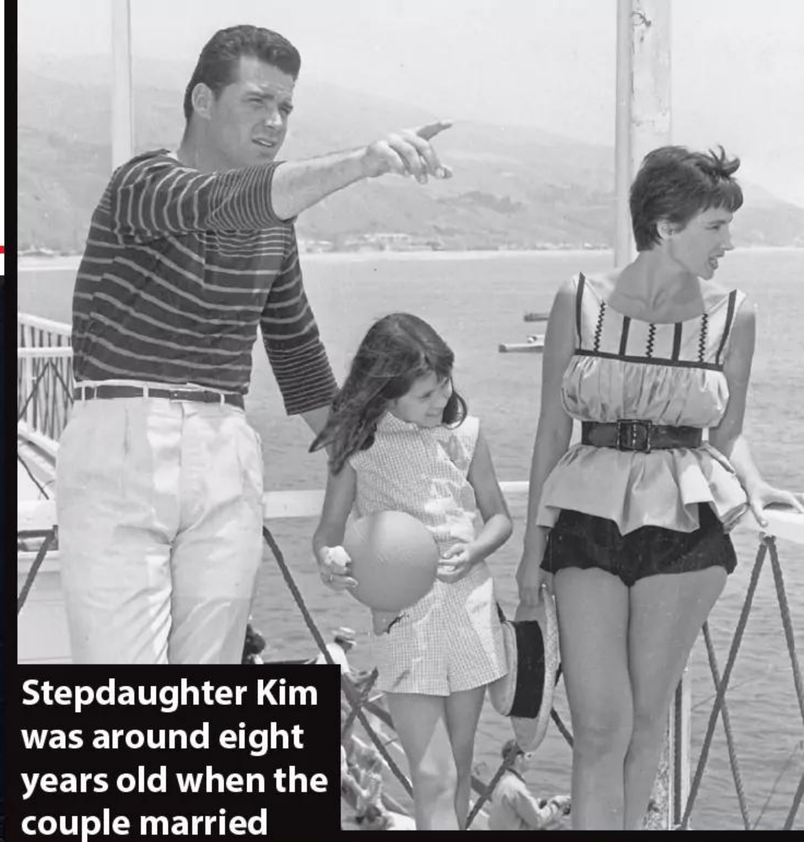
IN A SPIN: 1 Babes in Toyland, 2 The Apartment, 3 Trading Places, 4 Home Alone, 5 Die Hard.

WHO AM I? Mickey Rooney.

PIXELLATE: Barbara Stanwyck.

A love that lasted a lifetime

Vaughan Willmore reveals how James Garner's longest success wasn't Hollywood fame, but his enduring marriage to Lois Clarke



Stepdaughter Kim was around eight years old when the couple married





Lois and James's daughter Gigi has run Garner's production company, Cherokee Productions, since his death in 2014



DID YOU KNOW?

James Garner won two Purple Hearts for his service in Korea. Due to an administrative error, he didn't receive the second medal until 1982, when it was presented to him on Good Morning America.

James Garner won two Golden Globes and two Primetime Emmy Awards, but for this most modest of men, fame and award ceremonies held little appeal. As far as Garner was concerned, his greatest achievement was his near 60-year marriage to his soulmate, Lois Clarke. It was a union that saved him; helping him to recover from a traumatic childhood and the pressures of international stardom.

James Garner (or Bumgarner as he was known) was born 7 April 1928. He endured a childhood plagued with death, poverty and abuse. He barely knew his birth mother, who died from a failed abortion when he was five years old. Garner's father would eventually abandon him and his siblings but not before bringing into their lives an abusive stepmother. Reflecting on her husband's troubled childhood, Lois said, 'Jim is a complicated man and is covering up lots of hurt.'

It's widely reported that the couple first met at a fundraising party for the Democrat Party. 'I fell in love for the first and last time on 1 August 1956, at an Adlai Stevenson for President rally,' Garner would say. 'Stevenson lost, but I won, because that's where I met Lois.' While that meeting was the catalyst for their relationship, Lois told a slightly different story.

'Jim tells everyone we met at a rally but it was a few days before that, at a party hosted by a mutual friend. I remember it well because Jim made quite an entrance. I thought, who is this man? He's too beautiful to be alive!' The following day, the mutual friend telephoned Lois to say that Garner wanted to see her. The friend helpfully suggested they accompany him to the Stevenson rally.

'Within a few minutes of seeing Jim again, he asked if I would have dinner with him,' explained Lois. 'I said yes! Later that evening, on our way to dinner, Jim stopped the car and asked if he could kiss me. Again, I said yes!' It was a whirlwind romance with them spending the following days (and evenings) together. Garner soon asked Lois to marry him. When she accepted, it brought him to tears. 'I never thought anybody would love me,' he said. They married on 17 August 1956. It was a little more than two weeks since they'd first set eyes on each other.



FAMILY VALUES

Neither of them could have imagined the career, wealth and fame that would come their way and the pressures it would bring. In 1957, Garner secured his breakthrough role in the TV series, Maverick (1957-62). While he was often away from home, both he and Lois worked hard to give Kimberley (Lois's daughter from a previous marriage) a normal upbringing as they did with their daughter, Gigi (born in 1958). Despite, or perhaps because of, Garner's own troubled upbringing, he was a committed family man, with both daughters speaking affectionately about their childhoods.

Garner's career, of course, went from strength to strength, with memorable roles in The Great Escape, Move Over, Darling (both 1963), and Grand Prix (1966), among many others. However, tough filming schedules and long periods apart can test the best of marriages, and theirs was no different. In 1970, they separated for three months. Nine years later they separated again, this time for 18 months. It's no coincidence that the longer separation coincided with the filming of The Rockford Files (1974-80).

The making of the iconic TV series was intense – 15-hour days for months on end. It wasn't helped by Garner being something of a perfectionist, going above and beyond in the role he cherished the most. The final season ran from 1979 to 1980 but was impacted by both disagreements with studio executives and Garner's health – he'd suffered for much of his life from chronic knee and back pain. Garner's decision to leave was also influenced by his desire to spend more time with his family. Reflecting on that period, Garner said, 'Lois and I were never in serious trouble. 99% of the problem was the pressures of The Rockford Files. It was never about us. It was about me needing to get my head together.'

KINDNESS MATTERS

They both valued their privacy and were dedicated to their children. They shared a love of the arts and passionately believed in civil rights – they were both political animals. In fact, for his role in the 1985 CBS miniseries Space, Garner insisted his character's political affiliation be changed, explaining that, 'My wife would leave me if I played a Republican.'

When asked about the longevity of his marriage, Garner said the secret was 'treating each other with kindness and never taking each other for granted.' He readily acknowledged that, 'Without Lois, I wouldn't be the man that I am.'

James Garner passed away in July 2014 at the age of 86. It was just a few weeks short of what would have been their 58th wedding anniversary. Lois went on to live another seven years, before dying in October 2021. Together, James and Lois Garner enjoyed a whirlwind romance, raised two loving daughters, and shared a love that lasted not one, but two lifetimes.

NEXT ISSUE



An unbreakable bond Exploring the complex and sometimes turbulent relationship of Hollywood legends Debbie Reynolds and Carrie Fisher.

On the set of Brief Encounter 80 years on, we look at the enduring appeal of David Lean's British classic.

Laurel & Hardy The unlikely reality behind the comedy duo's different screen personas.

When Baker Street went to war How Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson helped boost wartime morale.

Remembering TV favourites The Addams Family, Tenko & Dick Turpin

On sale 18 December

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FREE CLASSIC POSTER

Alfred Hitchcock's The Man Who Knew Too Much (1934) tells the tale of an ordinary man and wife, Bob (Leslie Banks) and Jill (Edna Best), who are accidentally swept up into an extraordinary adventure while holidaying in St Moritz. Their friend, Louis (Pierre Fresnay), is murdered before their eyes, but before he dies he passes on a vital piece of information, which he urges them to give to the British authorities.

In order to ensure Bob does not go through with this, the killers, who turn out to be an international cabal of deep-cover spies, kidnap the couple's daughter, Betty (Nova Pilbeam), threatening to kill her if the details are passed on.

For Peter Lorre, who played the criminal mastermind behind the kidnap, the film was a godsend.

Early in 1933, following the rise of Nazism and Joseph Goebbels' announcement that Jews were now excluded from the film industry, Lorre and his wife Celia Lovsky fled to Vienna and on to Paris. With no regular income and no future roles in the offing, things were looking bleak. But fortunately, fate intervened.

DID YOU KNOW? Hitchcock's trademark director's cameo appears 33 minutes into the film. He walks across the road dressed in a dark trench coat.

Arriving in England with only one suit, a dress coat and a smattering of English, Lorre met with Hitchcock at the Hotel Mayfair, ingratiating himself by laughing at Hitchcock's jokes, despite understanding little of what was said. It worked, and he got the job.

Although fluent in German, Hungarian and French Lorre's poor grasp of English meant that he had to learn much of the script phonetically. 'I wasn't the man who knew too much English when I started the picture,' Lorre recalled.



Betty was 15-year-old Nova Pilbeam's second film role. She went on to star in Hitchcock's Young and Innocent (1937)

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