

WNCC



Letter From An Unknown Woman U.S.A. (1948); 90 minutes; Cert. A



An affair to remember: Joan Fontaine, Louis Jourdan

Producer:	John Houseman
Director:	Max Ophüls
Script:	Howard Koch
From the story by:	Stefan Zweig
Photography:	Franz Planer
Editor:	Ted J. Kent
Sets:	Alexander Golitzen
Costumes:	Travis Banton
Music:	Daniele Anfitheatre
Sound:	Leslie I. Carey,
Lisa Berndle	Joan Fontaine
Stefan Brand	Louis Jourdan
Frau Berndle	Mady Christians
Johann Stauffer	Marcel Journet
John	Art Smith
Herr Kastner	Howard Freeman
Lt. Leopold von Kaltnegger .	John Good
Stefan, Jr.	Leo P. Pessin
Concierge	Otto Waldis
Porter	Erskine Sanford
Frau Spitzer	Sonia Bryden

This is the Club's first showing of a film by Max Ophuls. He was one of many artists who fled Germany in the 1930s. His reputation was such that he was invited to direct in Russia, but left after a brief visit. He worked in France, Italy and Holland and then Hollywood where 'Letter from an Unknown Woman' was produced by John Houseman's independent company, Rampart, for Universal, in 1948.

They do not make films like this anymore. Melodrama is now strictly for laughs. Bring handkerchiefs even if you admire Tarantino and reserve your compassion for Mike Leigh's heroines. On the surface this is film by a central European romantic. The words usually applied to his work are 'elegant', 'nostalgic', 'tender', 'gracious' and they are accurate. The Vienna of 'Letter from an Unknown Woman' never existed outside 'Die Fledermaus' and 'Bitter Sweet'. It was a crumbling capital of a crumbling empire. But you are taken into a misty, magic, corner of a great city, seen through the eyes of a young girl. Later, in 'La Ronde', Ophuls used Anton Walbrook to beckon you into Paris to see another human comedy. Here the story is told in flashback by the wronged girl.

This is the classic tale of an innocent girl seduced by a blackguard, Stefan Brand. But what a blackguard! Louis Jourdan is what every Woody Allen would like to be, handsome, amusing, talented, on the point of a career as a concert pianist following in the footsteps of Franz List. This amoral, conceited scoundrel is the focus of the lasting love of Lisa Berndle, played by Joan Fontaine. Seduced by him as a girl she marries to give Brand's child a name. Later she meets him again and It doesn't need telling. Her letter to him at her death tells the whole story in flashback.

Joan Fontaine is never included among the Hollywood greats. She was christened Joan de Beauvoir de Havilland and tends to be overshadowed by her sister Olivia. But it was Fontaine who won an Oscar for her role in 'Suspicion' in 1941 and was the star of 'The Constant Nymph', 'Rebecca' and 'Jane Eyre'. While specialising in the vulnerable, she was tough enough to upstage Charles Boyer, Lawrence Olivier and then Orson Welles. Here she moves from child to dying mother, telling her story to the man who wronged and then forgot her. Its unrashionable and irresistible.

This sound corny. The setting is a chocolate-box Vienna. But the Austro-Hungarian empire was falling apart. This is the world of 'The Round-up' shown by the club in the 1995-96 season. This was a common story of women in the 19th century. The single-mother was an outcast and men did fight duels over their own honour. Typhus killed rich and poor. The contrast and the irony are there, but Ophuis keeps the touch delicate. Lights on will be delayed at the end for those of a tender disposition to escape unobserved into the dark.

Marten Shipman

JOAN FONTAINE
US actress (1917-)

The younger sister of Olivia de Havilland (qv), she began her acting career under the name Joan Burfield and made her film debut in *No More Ladies* (35). Although she had played leading roles opposite Fred Astaire (qv) in *A Damsel in Distress* (37) and Douglas Fairbanks Jr (qv) in *Gunga Din* (39), it was only as the heroine of *Rebecca* (40) that she achieved stardom and a best actress Oscar nomination. She won the award for *Suspicion* (41) and was again nominated for *The Constant Nymph* (42). Her 1940s roles, including *Jane Eyre* (43), leaned towards the genteel, but she matured into tougher, sometimes vicious characterisations in *Born to Be Bad* (50), *Flight to Tangier* (53), *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt* (56) and *Tender Is the Night* (62). Her husbands included the actor Brian Aherne, producer William Dozier and producer Collier Young.



LOUIS JOURDAN, JOAN FONTAINE

REACTIONS: The Story So Far.....

<i>BRASSED OFF</i>	8.14%	[51 votes]
<i>PYGMALION</i>	8.09%	[32 votes]
<i>SHINE</i>	8.03%	[43 votes]
<i>SECRETS & LIES</i>	7.88%	[40 votes]
<i>STAGECOACH</i>	7.44%	[39 votes]
<i>THE PROMISE</i>	7.25%	[44 votes]
<i>CARRINGTON</i>	6.73%	[49 votes]
<i>SMOKE</i>	6.71%	[35 votes]
<i>SCENT OF GREEN PAPAYA</i>	6.34%	[29 votes]
<i>THE LAST DETAIL</i>	6.15%	[41 votes]
<i>VERONIKA VOSS</i>	5.03%	[32 votes]

NB: Helen assures me that the score for *Shine* is correct - it just goes to show what damage a couple of 5's can do to an otherwise decent score!

REACTIONS

Older members may recall that when WNCC won the Film Society of the Year award back in 1988, we used our £500 prize to finance a reprint of 'The Greatest Show on Earth' on 16mm. It seems that the BFi have belatedly followed our lead....

Your Name Here (£500)

BFI plan offers credit for "credit" . . .



THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE has announced an inventive scheme to raise money for the preservation of classic films. For a mere £500, anyone can have their name immortalised in the opening credits to the movie.

Films being offered include 'The Importance Of Being Earnest', 'The Fallen Idol', 'Under Capricorn' and 'The Elusive Pimpernel'.

The BFI scheme is an attempt to

preserve 18 million feet of film every year. The work is necessary since films made before the 1950s were printed on nitrate stock, which has a nasty habit of either bursting into flames or crumbling into a brown powder. Around £5 million is needed to continue the work.

Curator Anne Fleming said: "We very much hope that people who love and value film will be persuaded to do their bit and help the archive to continue to preserve the best of our cinematic heritage. Enthusiasts will be able to ensure that British Film Classics survive for future generations to enjoy."

For further details of the scheme, tel: 0171 957 8921.

[extract taken from 'Empire' magazine]



TEN actors who played U.S. Presidents:

- 1 Frank Windsor: George Washington In Revolution
- 2 Henry Fonda: Abraham Lincoln In Young Mr Lincoln
- 3 Alexander Knox: Woodrow Wilson In Wilson
- 4 Ralph Bellamy: Franklin D. Roosevelt In Sunrise At Campobello
- 5 James Whitmore: Harry Truman In Give 'Em Hell, Harry!



- 6 Cliff Robertson (above): John F. Kennedy in PT 109
- 7 Charlton Heston: Andrew Jackson In The President's Lady
- 8 Jason Robards: Ulysses Grant In The Legend Of The Lone Ranger
- 9 Brian Keith: Theodore Roosevelt In The Wind And The Lion
- 10 Burgess Meredith: James Madison In Magnificent Doll



TEN parts played by Sid James in Carry On ... films:

- 1 Sir Sidney Ruff-Diamond (Carry On Up The Khyber)
- 2 Johnny Finger aka The Rumpo Kid (Carry On Cowboy)
- 3 Sir Rodney Ffing aka The Black Fingernail (Carry On Don't Lose Your Head)
- 4 Sid Boggle (Carry On Camping, below)



- 5 Gladstone Screwer (Carry On Again Doctor)
- 6 Bill Boosey (Carry On Up The Jungle)
- 7 Sidney Bliss (Carry On Loving)
- 8 Sid Plummer (Carry On At Your Convenience)
- 9 Bert Handy (Carry On Regardless)
- 10 Sidney Fiddler (Carry On Girls)

COMING NEXT

Copycat (USA; 1995) [18] Director: Jon Amiel.

It was surprising, given the talent involved - Holly Hunter ('The Piano') and Sigourney Weaver ('Working Girl') - that Jon Amiel's taut thriller did not receive more recognition. Weaver is a criminal psychologist, an expert on serial killers who becomes reclusive after a brush with one of her subjects; Hunter is the detective who desperately needs her help with a difficult case.

Richard III (GB/USA; 1995) [15] Director: Richard Loncraine.

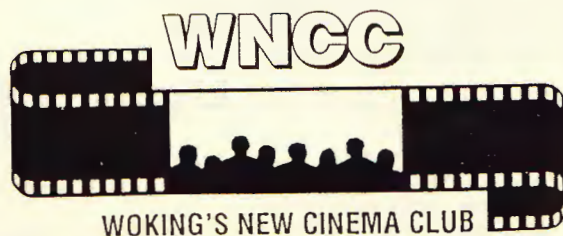
This imaginative and exciting Shakespearean adaptation with a mythical 1930's setting, is stuffed full of British acting talent, including: Sir Ian McKellen as the crookback; Nigel Hawthorne as his brother, Clarence; and Kristin Scott-Thomas as Lady Anne, with solid support from many other familiar faces, in settings as diverse as Brighton Pavilion and Battersea Power Station.

School For Scoundrels (GB; 1960) [U] Director: Robert Hamer.

A completely silly and thoroughly British end to the season is in store, as expert tutor Alistair Sim attempts to educate the extremely wet Ian Carmichael in the subtle skills of one-upmanship, in the face of stiff opposition from the ultimate cad, Terry-Thomas.

[Plus: Annual General Meeting].

[Taken from recent editions of The Daily Mail]



apri 09
may 14
may 2001

PYGMALION (26/2/98)

32 reactions, average score **8.09**

REACTIONS

Comments

Very G. B. Shaw even if the end is changed.

Very amusing.

'Ighly henjoyable!

Can't help comparing it with My Fair Lady.

How fantastic to think this was made 60 years ago.

Notable acting by all the principals. The tea party was the funniest thing I've seen in years.

Expected a song at any moment! Very good quality for the age.

Helen Sayers



COMING NEXT

26th March 1998

at Mayford Village Hall,
commencing at 8.00 pm

The Coen Brothers' sixth feature marks a return to the form of their startling debut *Blood Simple*. The sharp script and direction are superbly treated by an intelligent cast, particularly Frances McDormand as a heavily pregnant police chief investigating a spate of bizarre and brutal murders. Her performance, like the film itself, avoids the sentimental, instead beguiling the audience with a delicious blend of wit, horror and close human observation.

Programme ends at 10.10 pm
(approx)

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"A DELICIOUSLY CONVOLUTED
TALE OF CRIME, PUNISHMENT
AND A COWARDLY
USED CAR SALESMAN"
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"GRIPS WITH A
HUNDRED TINY TEETH...
WITHOUT QUESTION ONE
OF THE BEST FILMS YOU'LL
SEE THIS YEAR"
MELBOURNE MAKER

A FILM BY JOEL AND ETHAN COEN

FARGO

SMALL TOWN
BIG CRIME
DEAD COLD



FRANCES McDORMAND WILLIAM H. MACY STEVE BUSCEMI