

The Main Feature

Season 31 - Issue 15 (screening 28.4.11)



USA

1946

110 minutes

Director Charles Vidor  
 Producer Virginia Van Upp  
 Story E A Ellington  
 Screenplay Jo Eisenger  
 Marion Parsonnet  
 Music Hugo Friedhofer  
 Cinematography Rudolph Mate  
 Editor Charles Nelson

Cast	Gilda	Rita Hayworth
	Johnny Farrell/Narrator	Glenn Ford
	Ballin Mundson	George Macready
	Det Maurice Obregon	Joseph Calleia
	Uncle Pio	Steven Geray

Gilda is a black and white film noir with Rita Hayworth the eponymous femme fatale in the role for which she is best remembered. The term film noir was coined by French critics after the Second World War and applied to movies which typically portray the darker side of crime and corruption; and whose heroes, as well as villains, tend to be deeply imbued with cynicism. Nothing is quite what it seems and the people, including the women, are equally ambivalent. The Maltese Falcon was an early and outstanding example of film noir, but Gilda was not far behind.



The film is narrated throughout by Johnny Farrell (Glenn Ford) a small time American gambler newly arrived in Buenos Aires, who has a love hate relationship with Gilda his former lover. When he wins a lot of money, cheating at craps, he has to be rescued from a robbery attempt by a complete stranger, Ballin Mundson (George Macready). Mundson tells him about an illegal high-class casino, but warns him not to practice his skills there. Farrell ignores this advice; cheats at blackjack and is taken before the casino's owner who turns out to be Mundson. However, Farrell persuades Mundson to hire him and quickly gains his confidence. One day Mundson returns from a trip with a beautiful new wife: Gilda, the bewitching Rita Hayworth. Unaware that she was once Farrell's lover, Mundson assigns Farrell to keep an eye on her. Farrell thus becomes embroiled in this misogynistic ménage à trois, but his loathing for Gilda intensifies as she cavorts with men at all hours.

This is one thread to the story, but the other involves German businessmen and a tungsten cartel in which Mundson acts as a front man. The film, we must remember, was made in 1946 and within America there was something of a paranoia about the escape of Nazis after the Second World War to South America, their activities and what could be done about it. The Argentine secret police become involved and as the film continues the two threads come together as the story reaches its climax.



The film, a confusion of gambling, romance and international intrigue, was reasonably well received by the critics at the time. It was no masterpiece, and the direction was somewhat static, but it caught the public's imagination most notably for the performance of the voluptuous Rita Hayworth. There was nothing subtle in the projection of her sex appeal and particularly in the picture's most iconic moment, as Hayworth peels off her long gloves while gyrating in a strapless black satin gown to Anita Ellis' dubbed rendition of "Put the Blame on Mame". (Anita Ellis was an American singer and actress who, in addition to Rita Hayworth, dubbed the singing voices of Vera Ellen and Jeanne Crain). Glenn Ford made Farrell one of the most ambiguous anti-heroes of the 1940s and George Macready's Munsden was suitably evil, but for Rita Heyworth, Gilda provided her most famous role and the peak performance of her career.

Rita Hayworth was born Margarita Carmen Casino in 1918 the daughter of a Spanish flamenco dancer and a Ziegfield girl, Volga Hayworth. She switched to her mother's name in 1937. Her career had a slow beginning, but in 1939 she was given a small but important role in *Only Angels Have Wings*, playing opposite Cary Grant and Jean Arthur. Hayworth was described as the "only anaemic player in the film" but it was, nonetheless, a large box office success as was *The Strawberry Blonde*, also in 1941, when she appeared with James Cagney and Olivia de Havilland. Her popularity rose and she quickly became one of Hollywood's hottest properties. In *Blood and Sand*, the third of four films she made in 1941, she played the first of many screen sirens, and she subsequently became one of the top two pin up girls – the other was Betty Grable – of the war years.

Rita Hayworth spent her peak years with Columbia Pictures, but her relationship with the studio and especially with Harry Cohn was somewhat fraught. For a variety of reasons she rejected many opportunities, including *From Here to Eternity* and *Barefoot Contessa* in which she was replaced by, respectively, Deborah Kerr and Ava Gardner. But a particular source of resentment was the studio's failure to train her to sing. Although she appeared to sing in many of her films, including, of course, *Gilda*, most were dubbed. This was a closely guarded secret, but an acute embarrassment to Hayworth when in war time performances for the troops she was constantly asked to sing. However, the fault did not rest solely with Cohn. He had invested heavily in Rita Hayworth, but her private life was such as to place her career and Columbia's success in jeopardy.

Hayworth was married five times and divorced five times and none of her marriages lasted more than five years and some a good deal less. Her second marriage was to Orson Welles and her third, most notably controversially, to Prince Aly Khan. This followed a reckless affair with the already married Aly Khan and led to the British newspaper "The People", no less, calling for a boycott of Hayworth's films and pronouncing that Hollywood's "already tarnished reputation will sink to rock bottom if it restores this reckless woman to a place among its stars". In the event, after the collapse of her marriage to Aly Khan, Hayworth returned to America with great fanfare to star in a string of hit films. She continued to act in films until the early 1970s but alcohol, which had been a problem for most of her life, was taking its toll and later she was afflicted by Alzheimers disease. Cared for by her daughter, Yasmin Aly Khan, she died in 1987, aged 68.



Rita Hayworth: Sex Goddess, actress and dancer, but most particularly STAR, appeared in 61 films spread over a career of 37 years. She never received an Academy Award nomination and indeed her only notable award was a Golden Globe nomination for best actress in the *Magnificent Showman*. But as President Ronald Reagan, a contemporary, said of her "Rita Hayworth was one of the country's most beloved stars. Glamorous and talented she gave us many wonderful moments and delighted audiences from the time she was a young girl". Rita Hayworth is listed as one of the American Institute's Greatest Stars of All Time.

Neville Ledsome

*PS:*  
*There was a revived interest in the star following the publication of **Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption**, a novella by Stephen King and the subsequent extremely popular film (albeit without her name in the film's title), as a poster of the star plays a fundamental role (this still shows the moment when the poster is unveiled).*



## Reactions to ....Everlasting Memories – 14<sup>th</sup> April 2011

<b>Score</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Votes</b>	~	~	~	~	~	3	4	10	10	8	~
<b>Total received – 38</b>	<b>Average Score – 7.46</b>										

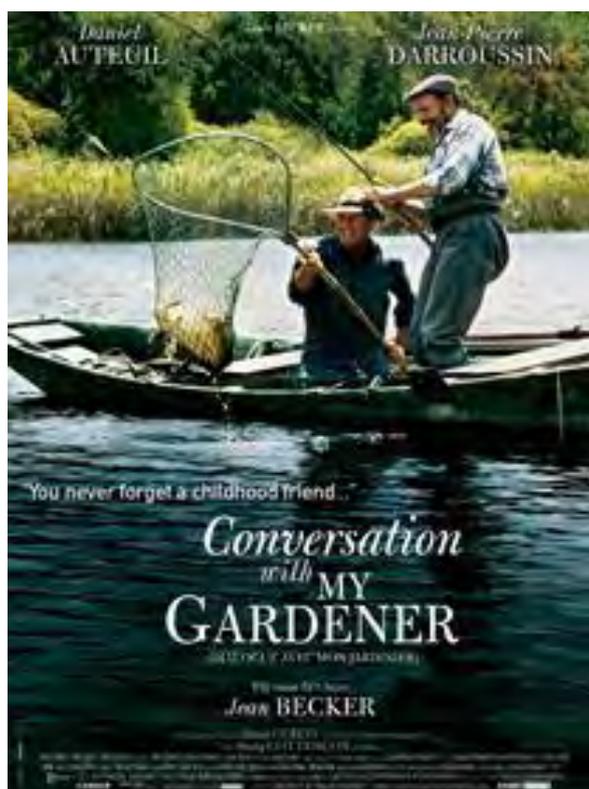
### Your Comments

Very atmospheric – a really pleasant film  
 I liked the sepia colouring, just like old photographs  
 Great opening credits and just got better: quite enthralling  
 Like a pleasant meal – not gourmet  
 A lovely film if somewhat improbable!  
 A simple film finely acted and beautifully photographed  
 A beautiful film – more like this please  
 Makes you think how we just snap away with a camera these days

Very enjoyable  
 A slow developer  
 Totally absorbing!  
 Really enthralling  
 A real gem of a movie  
 Super – very atmospheric  
 Nostalgic sad story but enjoyable  
 Yetta Bra!

Position	Film	Average Score
1 <sup>st</sup>	Invictus	8.02
2 <sup>nd</sup>	An Education	7.83
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Le premier jour de reste de ta vie	7.54
4 <sup>th</sup>	Everlasting Memories	7.46
5 <sup>th</sup>	Kongekabale ( <i>King's Game</i> )	7.36
6 <sup>th</sup>	The Hurt Locker	7.09
7 <sup>th</sup>	A Touch of Class	6.97
8 <sup>th</sup>	Cherry Blossom	6.88
9 <sup>th</sup>	Appaloosa	6.8
10 <sup>th</sup>	Europa, Europa	6.59
11 <sup>th</sup>	Oyster Farmer	6.02
12 <sup>th</sup>	Ushpizin	5.94
13 <sup>th</sup>	Fish Tank	5.79
17 <sup>th</sup>	Paranormal Activity	2.75

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at 8pm on  
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