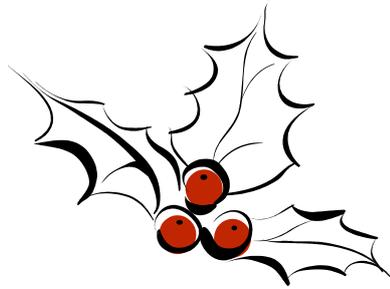


The Main Feature

Season 32 - Issue 7 (screening 8.12.11)



Merry Christmas



USA 1950

length 104 minutes Certificate U

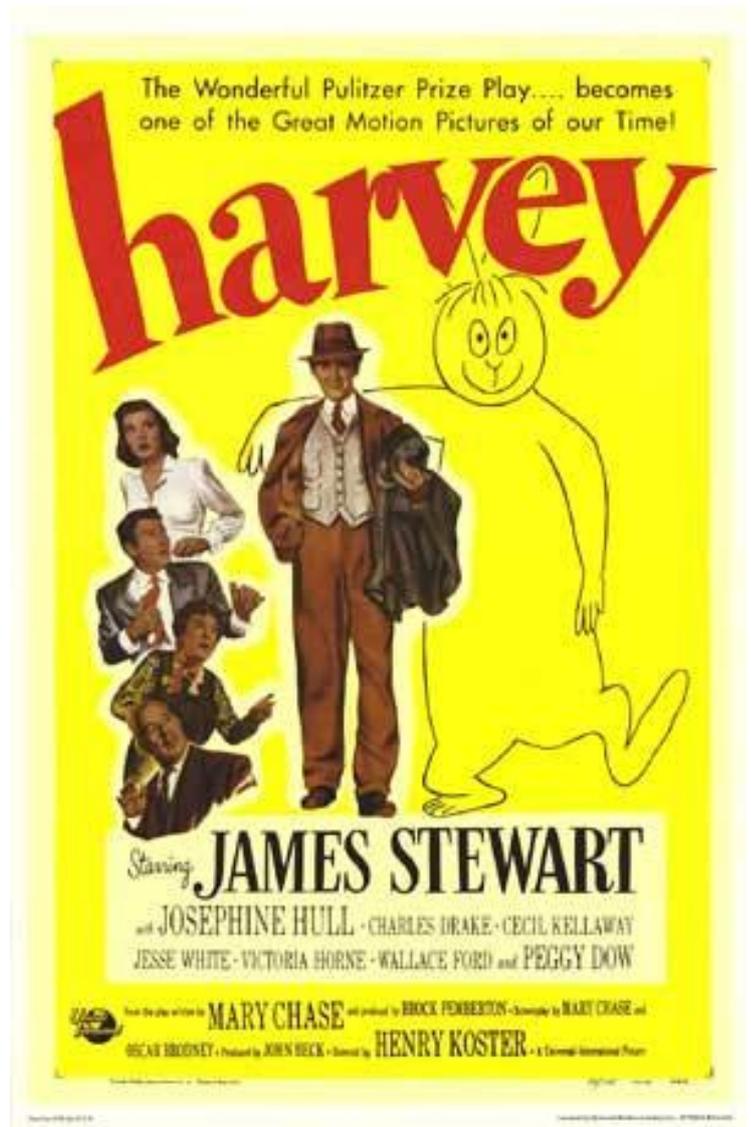
Director Henry Koster
 Screenplay by Mary Chase and Oscar Brodney
 (based on her play)

Cast:

Elwood P. Dowd	James Stewart
Veta Louise Simmons	Josephine Hull
Miss Kelly	Peggy Dow
Dr. Lyman Sanderson	Charles Drake
Dr. Willie Chumley	Cecil Kellaway
Judge Gaffney	William H. Lynn
Myrtle Mae Simmons	Victoria Horne
Marvin Wilson	Jesse White
Cab Driver	Wallace Ford
Mrs. Chumley	Nana Bryant
Mrs. Chauvenet	Grayce Mills

"Harvey" the movie is actually an adaptation of the Pulitzer winning Broadway play by Mary Chase, and it's a play which James Stewart starred in both prior to making this movie version as well as later on his life. By all accounts the big screen adaptation was a huge success on its release and many fans of the play also loved "Harvey" the movie, which makes a change.

However, James Stewart's Oscar nominated performance is one he is said to have not cared for, and one that was played much more sinisterly by him on the stage.



Born 20 May 1908 after graduating from Princeton with a degree in architecture, he joined the university Players at Falmouth, whose members included Henry Fonda and Margaret Sullivan. Later that year Stewart and Fonda were roommates when both took their first steps on Broadway, and also when they first arrived in Hollywood in 1935.

A gawky gangling young man with a slow, hesitant drawl and a shy country boy manner he was an oddity amongst Hollywood's leading men and a challenge to casting directors. However this oddity was soon revealed as a unique asset, and after some 19 films he made *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* (1939); *The Philadelphia Story* (1940) for which he won an Academy Award, leading him to become one of the leading stars of Hollywood.

In the 2nd World War, he rose from private to colonel in four year, one of the few Americans to see such progress. As a means to inspire his new group, Stewart flew as command pilot in the lead B-24 on numerous missions deep into Nazi-occupied Europe. These missions went *uncounted* at Stewart's orders. His "official" total is listed as 20. In 1944, he twice received the Distinguished Flying Cross for actions in combat and was awarded the Croix de Guerre.

After the war, Stewart took time off to reassess his career, and he spent much time with his friend Fonda. He was an early investor in Southwest Airways, founded by Leland Hayward, and considered going into the aviation industry if his re-started film career did not prosper. Upon Stewart's return to Hollywood in fall 1945, he decided not to renew his MGM contract. He signed with an MCA talent agency. His former agent Leland Hayward got out of the talent business in 1944 after selling his A-list of stars, including Stewart, to MCA. The move made Stewart one of the first independently contracted actors, and gave him more freedom to choose roles. Stewart was able to work without limits on director and studio availability for the remainder of his career.



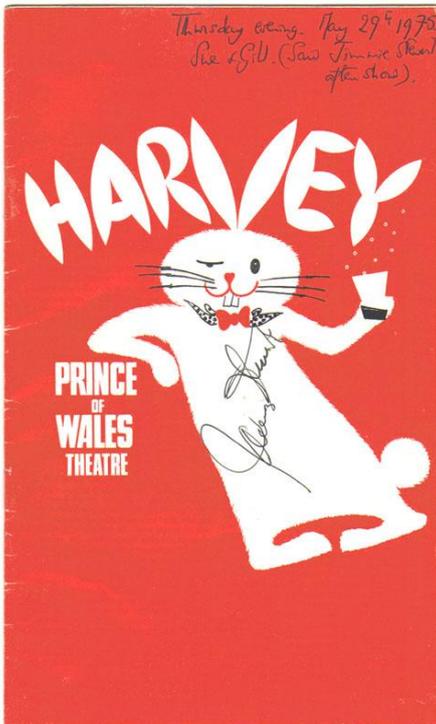
For his first film in five years, Stewart appeared in his third and final Frank Capra production, *It's a Wonderful Life*. It was not however a commercial success, despite President Harry S Truman stating after watching the film "If Bess and I had a son we'd want him to be just like Jimmy Stewart."



Further successful films eluded him for the rest of the decade and he decided to return to the stage for the Mary Chase-penned comedy, *Harvey*, which had opened to nearly universal praise in November 1944. Stewart took over the role from Frank Fay and gained an increased Broadway following in the unconventional play. The play, which ran for nearly three years with Stewart as its star, Bing Crosby was the first choice for the movie but he declined.

In 1950 he made *Winchester 73*, his first with the director Anthony Mann. It was a massive box office hit, and is a significant film in Hollywood history as the first where the star took a percentage of the profits rather than a salary. Stewart had wished to make *Harvey* for Universal-International but, when the studio wouldn't pay the \$200,000 salary Stewart wanted, studio head William Goetz made an offer that Stewart could make both *Harvey* and *Winchester '73* for a percentage of the profits that would be spread out over a period of time and qualify for a lower tax rate because Stewart would be taxed as a company rather than as an individual. Stewart's then agent Lew Wasserman was able to get his client 50% of the profits, eventually amounting to \$600,000 from the film's unexpected success. The money from a percentage deal was taxed as a capital gain attracting a much lower rate of tax than a normal salary would incur. Stewart's deal also gave him control of director and co-stars.

His career as a leading man extended into the early 1970's, when he made a Broadway comeback with *Harvey* in February 1970. In 1972 he was interviewed by Joan Bakewell at the NFT and spoke about the play:



"I was so glad to do it again because I never thought I did it right the first time. Age-wise I was much righter for it. It was tremendously successful. It was amazing that a play that seems dated in this world... A man whose best friend is a six-foot white rabbit... But it caught on, especially with young people - they surprised me most of all. A lot of people would say, 'Of course they like it: you're doing your thing, you got a big rabbit...'

'It's an escape from reality - you get drunk and you get a big rabbit. Fine.' But not at all! The kids didn't say that. The kids said that Harvey, the rabbit, was my way of confronting reality. All I was doing was having a friend who I could depend on to face reality with. That's pretty smart with the kids."

In 1975, twenty five years after giving his sterling and memorable performance in the film, Stewart brought the stage production to London and a signed copy of the programme is on sale on the internet for £125. WNCC member Malcolm Walrond advises that he saw the London production.

Stewart became a real life "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" in 1988, when he made an impassioned plea in Congressional hearings, along with colleagues Burt Lancaster, Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers, and film director Martin Scorsese, against Ted Turner's decision to 'colorize' classic black and white films, including *It's a Wonderful Life*. Stewart stated, "the coloring of black-and-white films is wrong. It's morally and artistically wrong and these profiteers should leave our film industry alone".

James Stewart, affectionately known to millions as Jimmy, was one of Hollywood's most distinguished actors and bankable leading men, turned to by the great directors to produce a career-long string of classic films.

He died on 2 July, 1997, leaving behind a life in which he had demonstrated his talents across a broad range of genres and won the industry's top awards along with legions of fans and admirers.

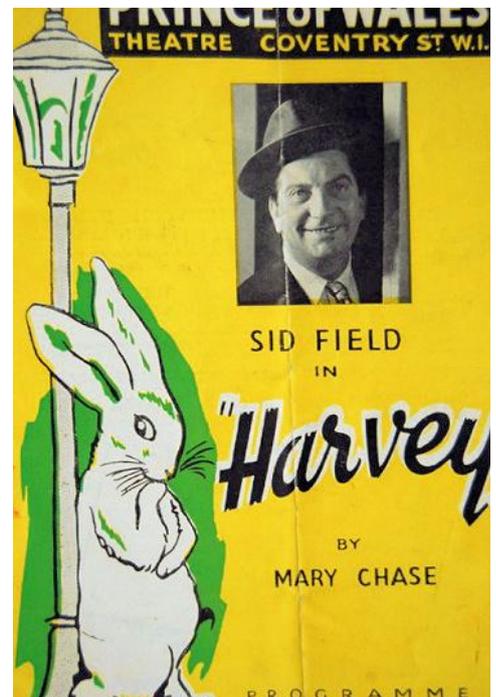
Iain McGlashan

PS

In 1949 the comedian Sid Field made his first "straight role" playing the part of Elwood P. Dowd in 'Harvey'. The play ran for 610 performances but sadly this was to be Field's last part as he died from a heart attack at his home in Richmond during the run of the play at the age of only 45 on the 3rd of February 1950.

Also in the cast was Jerry Desmonde, who as Fields' straight man was part of one of the most celebrated comedy teams ever to appear on stage.

However his involvement in the play must have been rather short as it is reported that he was ultimately sacked. (He later went on to feature in many Norman Wisdom films).



The printing of the notes for each film is undertaken by Repropoint free of charge

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sponsors photocopying of *the main feature*

Reactions to **The Secret in their eyes** – 24 November

Score 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 Votes ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ 1 1 15 18 7

Total received – 42

Average Score – 8.69

This is the 2nd highest audience reaction for any film screened by WNCC (*according to my records)

Your Comments

As near perfect as any film I can recall
 A cracking pace – a cracking film
 Very good yarn, well acted and directed
 Excellent – can't fault it!
 Excellent choice - well done
 Much better than I was expecting
 Best film seen for a long time – good story, and in the first half, very funny
 Wonderful choice – gripping, funny, romantic, unpredictably predictable
 Brilliant : a real cliff hanger – very enjoyable and funny
 Truly tremendous film – beautifully expressed emotions – accompanying music also beautiful- all that and humorous too!
 One of the most enjoyable films I've seen in a long time!
 Just perfect – acting, story and filming – a romance, thriller and comedy – ticked all the boxes

Outstanding
 Masterful
 Excellent
 Brilliant
 Highly enjoyable
 An excellent film – fast paced
 Excellent story and very well acted/filmed

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	The Secret in their eyes	8.69
2 nd	The Kings Speech	8.66
3 rd	Made in Dagenham	7.94
4 th	Etre et Avoir	6.94
5 th	Machan	6.81
6 th	Public Enemies	6.16

Our next film

8pm on Thursday 12 January 2012:

HAPPY NEW YEAR

