
**5001
NIGHTS
AT THE
MOVIES**

**PAULINE
KAEL**

*"She is, indeed, the Edward Wilson
of film reviewers."—Larry McMurtry*

FOREWORD by Wallace Shawn

It is unlikely that anyone in the world has reviewed more movies than Pauline Kael. It is also unlikely that anyone in the world carries around in his or her head more information about movies. When Pauline Kael sits down to review a new film, she is able to sum up pertinent details from the thousands of American and foreign films that preceded it. She remembers, and can describe, scenes, sequences, performances, shots, images, touches, gestures, effects. In herself, she is the international history, library, archive, encyclopedia of film—the cinemathèque. If numbers, or even knowledgeability, were all that mattered, she would be the champion. But these are merely a point of departure. She brings to her criticism more than stamina and a phenomenal memory, more than scholarship. What is most important, perhaps, is that she loves movies. Good and bad, they are her passion. Movies sustain her, and she, in turn, sustains many of the people who make them. Moviemakers may be satisfied or dissatisfied with her reaction to any given picture, but they are not inclined to dismiss it, and they never question her rapt involvement with movies. They know that she takes their work seriously, that she judges it by the most rigorous standards, that she gives it the attention it deserves. When she thinks that a picture has failed, she can become so intent on getting to the bottom of what went wrong that now and then, to her own astonishment, she wounds somebody's feelings, but even on those occasions the charms of her criticism are such that she is apt to be forgiven. And when she thinks that a picture succeeds she rejoices.

The originality of Pauline Kael's mind and temperament, her formidable intelligence, her eloquent use of the vernacular, her extraordinary analytical powers, her insight into character, her ability to shed light wherever the real world intersects with the world on film, her

enormous gift for social observation, the wit and energy and clarity of her prose all go into making her the singular critic she is. What she is primarily is a writer; one reads her for the sheer pleasure her writing affords. Her opinions are forceful, convincing, often unexpected, but whether or not one agrees with them one comes away from her writings in a state of exhilaration.

Pauline Kael's reviews are normally longer than most—long enough to daunt the uninitiated but not too long for her admirers. Yet in this volume she has assembled several thousand reviews—written for the *Going On About Town* department of *The New Yorker*—that are not only dazzling but brief, are models of compression. Nothing like this collection of short reviews has ever been seen before. They can be read by moviegoers or television viewers as a guide or they can be read for their own sake: either way they are a marvel. A master of synopsis, Pauline Kael has contrived to tell us between the covers of one book what eight decades of film are about and who is in them and behind them, and to reflect, swiftly but astutely, on what they signify. No one else has done that; no one else could have done that.

— William Shawn

AUTHOR'S NOTE

To the 1991 edition

I'm grateful to the people who took me up on the suggestion that they let me know about errors. I'm grateful also to those who wrote in suggesting titles to be included in this expanded edition. Whenever time and memory made it possible, I've complied. Roughly eight hundred titles have been added; they include most of the important films of the '80s. I know that there are still major omissions from every period, but I've done my damndest. (If I go on, I'll never stop.)

To the original edition

For a long time, despite persistent requests by the readers of *The New Yorker*, I resisted the idea of a collection of these notes, which were printed (anonymously) in the *Goings On About Town* section of the magazine, because they are often written hurriedly and are frequently dependent on my old, spotty memories. Also, there are so many different versions of them that I knew it would be a nightmare to sort out what should be reprinted. (Before I began writing for the magazine I had been doing short descriptions for theatres and colleges. Then, in my first years at the magazine I wrote three notes for each new film, so that they could be rotated, and if I wrote a longish note, this would gradually be cut down if the film continued to play.) And there was another reason: many of the notes are vandalized from my own reviews, and, in my first years at *The New Yorker*, when the *Goings On* was expanded to include revivals—partly because of my feeling that readers might be missing out on older films that they hadn't heard of—I sometimes tried to blend my view of a movie with some of the language from the magazine's initial review of it. So I've had to check

those reviews to give the proper credits.

Phrases from other reviewers still appear in eighty-odd cases—from Russell Maloney in *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, and *They Drive By Night*; from Theodore Shane in *Ben-Hur* (1925); from Philip Hamburger in *Ivanhoe*; from Brendan Gill in *The Agony and the Ecstasy*, *The Appaloosa*, *Hush . . . Hush*, *Sweet Charlotte*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*; from David Lardner in *Air Force*, *Lady of Burlesque*, and *This Is the Army*, from John Lardner in *Kismet* (1944) and *Step Lively*; from Edith Oliver in *The Blue Max*; from Wolcott Gibbs in *Over 21*, *Practically Yours*, and *The Thin Man Goes Home*; from John McCarten in *Anna and the King of Siam*, *Autumn Leaves*, *Blithe Spirit*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1949), *Down to the Sea in Ships*, *Forever Amber*, *Friendly Persuasion*, *Green Dolphin Street*, *Humoresque* (1946), *It Should Happen to You*, *Lady in the Lake*, *Lady on a Train*, *Leave Her to Heaven*, *Mighty Joe Young*, *Miss Sadie Thompson*, *Night and Day*, *The Outlaw*, *Possessed*, *The Razor's Edge*, *The Revolt of Mamie Stover*, *Ride the Pink Horse*, *Samson and Delilah*, *The Sea of Grass*, *Smash-Up*, *The Spiral Staircase*, *The Strange Love of Martha Ivers*, *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, *The Ten Commandments*, *The Three Musketeers* (1948), and *Titanic*; from John Mosher in *Blockade*, *Cleopatra* (1934), *Dr. Cyclops*, *Drums Along the Mohawk*, *The Garden of Allah*, *The Grade Allen Murder Case*, *Hold Your Man*, *Hollywood Party*, *The Informer*, *Intermezzo* (1939), *Invitation to Happiness*, *Jamaica Inn*, *Lillian Russell*, *The Mad Miss Manton*, *Made for Each Other* (1939), *Maid of Salem*, *Mannequin*, *The Mark of Zorro* (1940), *Meet Nero Wolfe*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Our Modern Maidens*, *Road to Singapore*, *The Shining Hour*, *The Sign of the Cross*, *Strange Cargo*, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935), *Tarzan and His Mate*, *This Gun for Hire*, *Up the River*, *Weekend in Havana*, *Zaza*, and *Zoo in Budapest*. Most of the time, these borrowings are no more than a few words, but in some I lifted descriptive passages that I liked. To these predecessors and colleagues I offer my thanks.

There were no strict rules in selecting the batch of brief notices from among the thousands more that I've got piled up. I wanted to suggest the range of what movies have done, and so I've brought together silent films and talkies, foreign films and American ones, and even some shorts. You won't find *Gone With the Wind* or *The Wizard of Oz*. Omitting them is a gesture: I wouldn't want anyone to take this book for a complete guide to movies. But I hope that it is a guide to the varieties of pleasures that are available at the movies—from the fun to be had at the juicier forms of trash to the overwhelming emotions that are called up by great work.

For those who may want a fuller analysis of a film: if I have written a review and if s included in one of my collections, this is indicated at the end of the notice.

No doubt errors have crept in—faulty recollections as well as typos. If you'll write to me (at The New Yorker, 25 West 43 St., New York, NY 10036), I'll do my best to see that such mishaps are corrected in any subsequent editions. And if there are films you'd particularly like to see added, please let me know and if (as I hope) I get the chance to expand this book I'll try to fit them in.

This book is for my daughter Gina and for the one to whom I hope it will prove most useful, her son William.

A Nous la Liberté

France (1931): Comedy
97 min, No rating, B&W

René Clair's imaginative social satire on the mechanization of modern life begins with a man (Raymond Cordy) who escapes from prison and builds a phonograph-record business with an assembly line that's as regimented as the prison. This factory owner is modelled on Charles Pathé, who said of his phonograph-cinema empire, "Only the armaments industry made profits like ours." The tycoon's pal from his prison days is a softhearted "little man" (Henri Marchand)-the underdog embodiment of a free, humanistic spirit. Beautifully made, the picture has elegantly futuristic sets by Lazare Meerson, and Georges Périnal's cinematography has a simplified, formal perfection; the whole film is paced to Georges Auric's memorable score-one of the earliest (yet best) film scores ever written. Clair's directing demonstrates that sound pictures can be as fluid as silents were, and this picture is rightly considered a classic. Yet it isn't as entertaining as his earlier (silent) THE ITALIAN STRAW HAT or his later LE MILLION; the scenario (which he wrote) turns a little too carefree and ironic-the film grows dull. A NOUS LA LIBERTÉ was obviously the source of some of the ideas in Chaplin's 1936 MODERN TIMES; the producing company filed suit against Chaplin for copyright infringement, but Clair had the suit dropped, saying that "All of us flow" from Chaplin, and "I am honored if he was inspired by my film." In French.

The Abdication

UK (1974): Historical
103 min, Rated PG, Color

This Warners picture about Queen Christina's stepping down from the Swedish throne, in 1654, is embalmed in such reverence for its own

cultural elevation that it loses all contact with the audience. Liv Ullmann is the virgin queen who becomes a Catholic hoping to find ecstasy in God, and Peter Finch is the cardinal who examines her motives. Anthony Harvey directed, on his knees. We're never allowed to forget the exalted rank of the characters, and nothing like human speech intrudes upon the relentless dignity of Ruth Wolff's script (adapted from her own play). Ullmann doesn't have the high style or the mystery that her grand-gesture role requires; her performance is dutifully wrought and properly weighted-she's like a hausfrau who's too conscientious to give good parties. With Cyril Cusack, Paul Rogers, Michael Dunn, and Edward Underdown. The turbulent, pseudo-liturgical score is by Nino Rota; the pictorial cinematography is by Geoffrey Unsworth. see Reeling.

About Last Night...

US (1986): Romance/Comedy
113 min, Rated R, Color

In *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, David Mamet's one-act play about singles bars and the hostility between the sexes, Bernie, the major character, is a macho braggart; his stooge, the passive Danny, soaks up Bernie's poison-his obsession that women are out to trap them. In this adaptation, written by Tim Kazurinsky and Denise DeClue, and directed by Edward Zwick (it's his first picture), Danny, played by Rob Lowe, is the major character-and a hero. He's intimidated by his pal Bernie (Jim Belushi), but he learns to trust his love for Debbie (Demi Moore) and get off the singles treadmill. And Debbie casts out the doubts that are engendered by her roommate, the caustic Joan (Elizabeth Perkins). The movie is close to being a conventional romance about the adjustments that lovers have to make in their first year together-except that Bernie is around yelling, and Joan keeps putting everybody down. The screenwriters retain much of Mamet's dialogue, but they piece it out, and the director punches up the breaks between scenes with rock music. It's like being pounded on the back every two minutes when your back is already sore (because the

dialogue has been whacking you so hard). If anyone comes out of this enterprise with honor it's Perkins, who, in her first screen appearance, brings appealing, plaintive undercurrents to a ghastly role. Tri-Star. see Hooked.

Absence of Malice

US (1981): Drama
116 min, Rated PG, Color

A trim, well-paced newspaper melodrama that queries journalistic practices. Sally Field is the basically insensitive, eager-beaver Miami reporter who snaps up a story that the head of a federal strike force investigating the disappearance of a union leader leaks to her. The story is false-the federal man's purpose is simply to stir things up by putting pressure on an honest businessman who has Mafia relatives. Paul Newman is the victim, and the movie is about how he turns the methods of the authorities and the newspaperwoman against them. It's doubtful that people who are out to get even are as calm and well-balanced as this character; Newman gives revenge class, so we can all enjoy it. The script, by Kurt Luedtke, a former newspaperman, is crisply plotted, but he doesn't write scenes to reveal anything more in the characters than the plot requires. Sydney Pollack's directing is efficient and the film is moderately entertaining, but it leaves no residue. Except for the intensity of Newman's sly, compact performance (especially in the one scene when he blows up at the reporter and hisses his rage right into her ear), and the marvellously inventive acting of Melinda Dillon, in the role of an achingly helpless, frightened woman, and the character bits by Barry Primus, Luther Adler, Josef Sommer, Wilford Brimley, Don Hood, and John Harkins you could get it all by reading an article. As the head of the strike force, Bob Balaban must think that he's doing Captain Queeg. He has devised an attention-getting nervous shtick-he spins his hands around while playing with rubber bands-and he never gives it a rest. Columbia. see Taking It All In.

Absolute Beginners

UK (1986): Musical
107 min, Rated PG-13, Color

Colin MacInnes's 1959 novel-an inventive, slangy, poetic celebration of youth and jazz and London, and a cry of disgust at the way teenagers, who didn't emerge as a group with money to spend until the 50s, are already being commercialized and corrupted-has been turned into a stylized, wide-screen musical by Julien Temple. Whether because of the fast-cutting style that Temple developed from his work in rock videos or because of the generally undistinguished choreography, it's peculiarly unlyrical and ephemeral. The film has a glossy immediacy, and you can feel the flash and determination that went into it. What you don't feel is the tormented romanticism that made English adolescents in the 70s swear by the novel the way American kids had earlier sworn by *The Catcher in the Rye*. David Bowie, James Fox, Ray Davies, Anita Morris, and Sade provide entertaining moments; Lionel Blair, Bruce Payne, and Graham Fletcher-Cook come through with glints of humor. But the two central teenage characters-Colin (Eddie O'Connell) and the girl he loves, Suzette (Patsy Kensit)-seem generic. Musical arrangements by Gil Evans; cinematography by Oliver Stapleton; screenplay by Richard Burridge, Christopher Wicking, and Don MacPherson. Also with Slim Gaillard, Steven Berkoff, and Mandy Rice-Davies. Released in the U.S. by Orion.
see *Hooked*.

Accident

UK (1967): Drama
105 min, No rating, Color

Joseph Losey and his scenarist, Harold Pinter, use sexual desperation amid the beauty of Oxford in summertime to make our flesh crawl. A cleverly barbed comedy of depravity-uneven, unsatisfying, but with

virtuoso passages of calculated meanness and, as the centerpiece, a long, drunken Sunday party, with people sitting down to supper when they're too soused to eat. As a weakling philosophy don, Dirk Bogarde goes through his middle-aged-frustration specialty brilliantly, gripping his jaw to stop a stutter or folding his arms to keep his hands out of trouble. With Baker, who is properly swinish as another academic, and Vivien Merchant, Jacqueline Sassard, Michael York, Alexander Knox, and Delphine Seyrig as a dumb blonde. From the novel by Nicholas Mosley; cinematography by Gerry Fisher; music by Johnny Dankworth. see Kiss Kiss Bang Bang.

The Accidental Tourist

US (1988): Comedy
121 min, Rated PG, Color

It begins with the numb grief of a punctilious Baltimore travel writer, Macon Leary (William Hurt), whose 12-year-old son was senselessly shot by a gunman in a Burger Bonanza. Macon has become such a depressed loner that his wife (Kathleen Turner) leaves him. The movie, directed by Lawrence Kasdan, who wrote the screenplay with Frank Galati, closely follows the 1985 Anne Tyler novel, and it's about Macon's coming to life. A fiercely eager oddball (Geena Davis) who pulls him into her bed turns out to be his salvation. The plot construction is that of a screwball comedy of the 30s: poor working girl has the life force that upper-class prig needs. But people talk a formal, affected English that sounds counterfeit and everyone seems catatonic-even the skinny oddball, whose tense talkativeness is as panicked as Macon's recessiveness and silence. This picture's ponderousness doesn't keep it from affecting some people deeply. It provides a new romantic myth of the 80s-a time of widespread remarriage and hoped-for rebirth. Essentially, this is a dating movie, like Claude Lelouch's *A MAN AND A WOMAN*, but for darker times, for times of lower expectations. The film's minimal fun has to do with the wry, pixillated family humor of Macon and his siblings (Amy Wright, Ed Begley, Jr., and David Ogden Stiers). The cast includes Bill

Pullman and Robert Gorman. Cinematography by John Bailey; the offensive rippling score is by John Williams. Warners. see [Movie Love](#).

Across the Bridge

UK (1957): Crime
103 min, No rating, B&W

Graham Greene's protagonist is a crooked international financier (Rod Steiger) who runs to Mexico, and the film is one long chase after this disintegrating quarry. Ken Annakin directed this English production, photographed in Spain, which some English critics regarded as their best thriller since *THE THIRD MAN*. (There may not have been much competition.) If the film had sustained the tension of its opening scenes the comparison with *THE THIRD MAN* might be apt, but the middle of the picture (and it's an extended middle) falls apart. It was invented by the screenwriters, Guy Elmes and Denis Freeman, who filled out Greene's 1938 short story. Steiger gives a dominating performance; Bill Nagy plays Scarff, whose identity the financier takes, not knowing that Scarff is a revolutionary, who is wanted in Mexico. Noel Willman is the vicious police chief; David Knight and Marla Landi are young lovers (she is beautiful, he is dreary).

Across the Pacific

US (1942): Spy
97 min, No rating, B&W

After his exhilarating debut film, *THE MALTESE FALCON* (1941), John Huston had a commercial failure with *IN THIS OUR LIFE*; then he tried to repeat the success of the *FALCON* with an action-adventure story, using some of the *FALCON* cast-Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, Sydney Greenstreet. The film was supposed to be about a group sailing to Honolulu to thwart a Japanese plan to blow up Pearl Harbor;

during the second week of shooting, the Japanese did blow up Pearl Harbor. The production was shut down and there was a hasty rewrite. The result is a complicated plot about spies who plan to blow up the Panama Canal, and there are assorted captures and hairbreadth escapes. Huston manages to give the sequences some tension, and though the shipboard scenes were in the custom of the time-filmed on the studio back lot, the images are airy and spacious. But Huston couldn't do anything about the essential mediocrity of the material, and when he was drafted into the Army Special Services before the picture was finished, he showed what he thought of the mess: he hurriedly shot a scene with Bogart trussed up and about to be killed, and then left his replacement director, Vincent Sherman, to figure out how to save Bogart in time to prevent the bombing of the Canal. The movie isn't really bad-just bewildering. Mary Astor comes off the worst; cast as a conventional heroine, she looks heavy and uncomfortable, and too big for Bogart, who, incidentally, was called Rick here-the name that was carried over the next year in CASABLANCA. With Victor Sen Yung, Charles Halton, Richard Loo, Keye Luke, and Monte Blue. Script by Richard Macaulay, from Robert Carson's SatEvePost serial Aloha Means Goodbye; montages by Don Siegel; cinematography by Arthur Edeson; music by Adolph Deutsch. Produced by Jerry Wald and Jack Saper, for Warners.

Act of the Heart

Canada (1970): Drama
103 min, Rated PG, Color

Geneviève Bujold, in one of those passionate, spiritual jobs about a girl who is "different." The heroine sings the solo with the church choir; she suffers while singing in a nightclub; she even-God help us-makes love with an Augustinian monk (in the unlikely, affable person of Donald Sutherland) at the front of the altar. After hours of fire symbolism, she finally pours kerosene on herself to create a new sacrifice for a world that has forgotten Jesus; by then you're ready to toss her a match. This Canadian film was written and directed by Paul Almond (Bujold's

husband at the time) who goes for obsessions and fatalities and an elliptical style, and is very high on portents. Bujold has some lovely bits, but the masochistic feminine-fantasy material forces her to fall back on the old fragile, incandescent child-woman shtick.
see Deeper into Movies.

The Actress

US (1953): Drama
91 min, No rating, Black & White

Ruth Gordon adapted her autobiographical play *Years Ago*, which dealt with a young girl in New England determined to make her way in the theatre, and it was turned into a pleasantly modest though disappointing picture by the director, George Cukor. Jean Simmons plays the title role with grace, but the author has neglected to provide indications of talent and drive in the character; this girl seems too nice, too ordinary-she could never grow up to be that tough, indefatigable trouper Ruth Gordon. (The heroine sets out on her own in 1911.) Despite the title, the central character is the girl's gruff, lovable father (Spencer Tracy); Tracy overdoes it, but he shows some energy, and the film is sadly short of it. With Teresa Wright giving a wan performance as the mother, Anthony Perkins making his first screen appearance, Ian Wolfe, Mary Wickes, Jackie Coogan as the joker in the gymnasium, and, in the best sequence, Kay Williams as a musical-comedy star. MGM.

Adalen 31

Sweden (1969): Historical
115 min, Rated X, Color

An extraordinarily sensitive re-creation of a strike and riot that altered the course of Swedish political life, seen through the eyes of an adolescent boy whose father dies in the events. Bo Widerberg, whose

previous film was ELVIRA MADIGAN, wrote and directed this beautiful yet uninspired piece of work; lush and lyrical as it is, it's fundamentally didactic, with stereotyped social-realist characters. And because Widerberg seems to work best in vignettes and to have architectural problems when he's working on such a large scale, his argument isn't clear; he makes the little points but not the big ones. So when the violence erupts, we don't really understand its political significance- we're left "appreciating" it, in a rather embarrassed way, for its pictorial values. In Swedish.
see Deeper into Movies.

Adam's Rib

US (1949): Comedy
100 min, No rating, B&W

George Cukor directed this "uncinematic" but well-played and often witty MGM comedy about the battle of the sexes. Katharine Hepburn, thin, nervous, and high-strung, keeps pecking away at Spencer Tracy, who is solid, imperturbable, and maddeningly sane. She attacks, he blocks; their skirmishes are desperately, ludicrously civilized. They are married lawyers on opposing sides in a court battle; the case involves equal rights for women, i.e., does Judy Holliday have the right to shoot her two-timing husband, Tom Ewell, in order to protect her home against Jean Hagen? The script by Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin is lively and ingenious (though it stoops to easy laughs now and then). Cukor's work is too arch, too consciously, commercially clever, but it's also spirited, confident. Holliday and Ewell have roles that seem just the right size for them; intermittently, Holliday lifts the picture to a higher, free-style wit. And as a composer-neighbor of the married lawyers David Wayne airily upstages the two stars; Hepburn is overly intense and Tracy does some coy mugging, but Wayne stays right on target. With Polly Moran, Clarence Kolb, and Hope Emerson (as a circus strong woman).

The Admirable Crichton

UK (1957): Comedy
94 min, No rating, Color
Also known as PARADISE LAGOON.

James M. Barrie's comedy about class distinctions was turned into the epic MALE AND FEMALE by Cecil B. De Mille in 1919 (the shipwrecked Gloria Swanson looked wonderful in wet satin). The best qualities of this English version derive from Barrie's original-solid construction, a sense of fun, and well-turned phrases at the expense of the English aristocracy (who seem to be more useful to the theatre than to the country). However, the director, Lewis Gilbert, works somewhat heavily and for rather boisterous effects, as if Barrie's gentle, expert style could be updated by noise. Kenneth More is "the perfect butler"-stuffy, tyrannical Crichton, and Cecil Parker is the democratic, liberal Lord Loam. Cast on a desert island where there are no classes, where skill and aptitude count, the servant becomes master, the master servant. This will hold few surprises for audiences; still there's something rather satisfying in the demonstration. PARADISE LAGOON is an interesting example of the way movies scavenge on themselves and their theatrical ancestors, and an indication of why: there's a solid nugget of entertainment in many of the old repertory items. The cast includes Martita Hunt, Sally Ann Howes, and Diane Cilento.

The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother

US (1975): Mystery/Comedy
91 min, Rated PG, Color

Gene Wilder's talent is evident in the many nice leafy touches, but in his first attempt at a triple-header (writer-director-star) he shows poor judgment and he gets bogged down in an overelaborate production.

The idea-Holmes' bringing in his insanely jealous younger brother, Sigerson, to help on a case involving Queen Victoria's state secrets- has mouth-watering possibilities, but they aren't developed. There's no mystery, and since you can't have a parody of a mystery without a mystery, there's no comic suspense. And Wilder, keeping his eye on his responsibilities as a director, loses his performing rhythm. A vaudeville number is disconcertingly like the specialty number in Mel Brooks' YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN (which Wilder co-wrote and starred in) and calls attention to the general similarity between the two films. With Madeline Kahn, Marty Feldman, Dom De Luise, Leo McKern, and Roy Kinnear. 20th Century-Fox.
see When the Lights Go Down.

The Adventurers

US (1970): Adventure
171 min, Rated PG, Color

This Paramount-Joseph E. Levine release seems to have been put together by scavengers with computers. It cuts back and forth between the massacres and upheavals of a mythical poor country in South America and the tortured sex lives of the international celebrity set in Europe and America, and every 15 minutes or so there's carnage or a cloddish sex scene to keep you from losing interest in the slack story. Sleazy (the Harold Robbins novel) and square (the approach of the director, Lewis Gilbert) don't blend entertainingly here; the film lacks crude dynamism-it's dispiriting. There are only a couple of amusing scenes: a nice moment when Thommy Berggren, as a gigolo, tips his doorman father (Ferdie Mayne), and a villainous moment or two by Alan Badel, as a Trujillo-style dictator. The international cast of this \$10 million clinker includes Bekim Fehmiu as the Porfirio Rubirosa-like hero, Candice Bergen, Charles Aznavour, Rossano Brazzi, Olivia De Havilland, Leigh Taylor-Young, Fernando Rey, Sydney Tafler, Ernest Borgnine, Anna Moffo, and John Ireland. The script is by Michael Hastings and Gilbert, the music is by Jobim, and the cinematographer, Claude Renoir, gives it all a better look than it deserves.

see Deeper Into Movies.

The Adventures of Baron Munchausen

US (1989): Fantasy
126 min, Rated PG, Color

The Baron, who lived from 1720 to 1797, was a fibber of genius-a fabulist. Terry Gilliam, who directed this special effects extravaganza, sees his theme as the liar as artist; his Munchausen (John Neville) is a poet, a man of imagination. He's pitted against the practical men who believe in facts and compromise and conformity (i.e., the men who finance movies). The elements are here for a fantasy on the order of THE WIZARD OF OZ and PINOCCHIO and the 1940 THE THIEF OF BAGDAD; the Baron and a 10-year-old girl (Sarah Polley) voyage to a city on the moon, fall into the fire god Vulcan's foundry inside the belching Mt. Etna, and are swallowed by a monster fish. Yet the picture is dry and choppy and remote. The design (by Dante Ferretti) and the cinematography (by Giuseppe Rotunno) are sometimes magnificent, and there are scenes that are near-inspired. Something is missing, though: a bit of conviction-of ardor and awe. Gilliam's hip silliness is deflating; his gifts-his gagster's prankishness and his sense of beauty-don't harmonize. The picture is almost devoid of emotional shadings. With Oliver Reed, who's a great rampaging Vulcan, Robin Williams (uncredited) as the King of the Moon, Uma Thurman as Venus, and Eric Idle, Jonathan Pryce, Sting, Valentina Cortese, Bill Paterson, Winston Dennis, Jack Purvis, Alison Steadman, and Charles McKeown, who co-wrote the script with Gilliam. Released by Columbia.
see Movie Love.

The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the Eighth Dimension

US (1984): Science Fiction/Comedy

103 min, Rated PG, Color

Also known as BUCKAROO BANZAI and ADVENTURES OF BUCKAROO BANZAI.

Making his debut as a director, W.D. "Rick" Richter doesn't bring out the baroque lunacy of the material-a kind of fermented parody of M*A*S*H, STAR WARS, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, and the TV series "The A-Team"-but though the characters don't develop and the laughs don't build or come together, the film's uninflected deadpan tone is somehow likable. Dr. Buckaroo Banzai (Peter Weller), the half-Japanese, half-American hero, is a neurosurgeon, a physicist, a jet-car racer (who goes right through a mountain), and the leader of the Team Banzai-seven dapper whizbang Renaissance men. For relaxation, Buckaroo and a few of the others have formed their own rock group, the Hong Kong Cavaliers, and it's at a Cavaliers' performance in a New Jersey night spot that the hypersensitive Buckaroo picks up the disturbed vibes of someone in the audience; that's how he meets the heroine, Penny Priddy (Ellen Barkin). Richter and the scriptwriter Earl Mac Rauch don't seem to have an angle of vision on the interplanetary fantasy world they present; what they've got are an unmoored hipsterism and a lot of inventiveness. As Dr. Lizardo, the mad-genius villain (a comic-strip mixture of Eisenstein, Klaus Kinski, and a Wagnerian tenor), John Lithgow gives the movie the anchor it needs. White-faced, with bloodshot eyes, dark greenish teeth, and a wild foreign accent, Lithgow's Dr. Lizardo can make you crazy with happiness. With Jeff Goldblum, Matt Clark as the Secretary of Defense, Carl Lumbly as the friendly alien who disguises himself as a Rastafarian, Christopher Lloyd, Vincent Schiavelli, Rosalind Cash, Ronald Lacey, and the platinum-blond Lewis Smith. The picture went through a change of cinematographers (it was completed by Fred J. Koenekamp), but the young production designer J. Michael Riva has given it a consistent-and radiant-whimsicality. 20th Century-Fox. see State of the Art.

Adventures of Don Juan

US (1948): Romance/Adventure
110 min, No rating, Color

By this time, Errol Flynn's offscreen life had colored the public's view of him, and this wry, semi-satirical swashbuckler was designed to exploit his reputation for debauchery. William Faulkner and Frederick Faust (Max Brand) were among the writers whom the Warners producer, Jerry Wald, brought in to work on various drafts of the screenplay, which was finally credited to George Oppenheimer and Harry Kurnitz. Flynn looks far from his best, and the whole lavish production has a somewhat depressed tone. The story has Juan saving Queen Margaret of Spain (Viveca Lindfors) from a traitor's skulduggery. With Romney Brent, Ann Rutherford, Alan Hale, Robert Warwick, Robert Douglas, Helen Westcott, Raymond Burr, Una O'Connor, Fortunio Bonanova, and Monte Blue. Those with keen eyes may spot bits of footage lifted from THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ELIZABETH AND ESSEX and THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD. The director Vincent Sherman's work is no more than adequate.

The Adventures of Robin Hood

US (1938): Adventure
102 min, No rating, Color

One of the most popular of all adventure films-stirring for children and intensely nostalgic for adults. As Robin, Errol Flynn slings a deer across his shoulders with exuberant aplomb; he achieves a mixture of daring and self-mockery, like that of Fairbanks, in the 20s. The film gives the legend a light, satirical edge: everyone is a bit too much of what he is. (The archetypal roles that the actors played here clung to their later performances.) With improbably pretty Olivia De Havilland as Maid Marian, Alan Hale as Little John, Ian Hunter as Richard the Lion-Hearted, Basil Rathbone and Claude Rains as the villains, and Herbert Mandin, Patric Knowles, Melville Cooper, Una O'Connor, Montagu Love, and Robert Warwick. The story is clear, the color ravishing, the acting simple and crude. Erich Wolfgang Korngold did

the marvellous score; the script is by Norman Reilly Raine and Seton I. Miller; the rousing, buoyant direction is credited to Michael Curtiz and William Keighley, the former having replaced the latter. Hal B. Wallis produced, for Warners.

Adventures of Robinson Crusoe

Mexico (1952): Adventure
90 min, No rating, Color

Luis Buñuel's version of the Defoe novel (made in English) is free of that deadly solicitude that usually kills off classics. The film is a simple, unsentimental account of Defoe's basic themes: a man alone face to face with nature; then a man terribly alone, unable to face lack of love and friendship; and finally, after the lacerations of desire, a man ludicrously alone. Buñuel used Dan O'Herlihy, a fine actor with a beautiful voice, and photographed him in the jungle of Manzanillo, near Acapulco. In the delirium sequence, Buñuel is the same startling director who made film history. When Crusoe shouts to the hills in order to hear the companionable echo, and when he rushes to the sea in desperate longing for a ship, loneliness is brought in sudden shocks, to the pitch of awe and terror. Crusoe's eventual meeting with Friday (James Fernandez) changes the tone to irony.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

US (1938): Adventure
77 min, No rating, Color

Norman Taurog, who had scored at the box office with SKIPPY and other films starring children, directed this fairly straightforward version, for David O. Selznick. It's a reasonably good family-style comedy-melodrama of its period, and the humor in many of Mark Twain's episodes survives the studio-made scenery, the Technicolor sunsets, and the obviousness of the tone. May Robson is Aunt Polly, tapping

her thimble briskly; Tommy Kelly plays Tom, and Ann Gillis is Becky Thatcher. The adaptation is by John Weaver.

The Adventuress

UK (1946): Spy
98 min, No rating, B&W

A romantic suspense comedy, with Deborah Kerr as an Irish girl, fed on anti-British folklore by her father. On her 21st birthday she goes off to Dublin, hoping to join the I.R.A., but becomes involved in a different kind of anti-British activity: spying for the Nazis. Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat, who produced, with Launder also directing, had written Hitchcock's *THE LADY VANISHES* and Sir Carol Reed's *NIGHT TRAIN TO MUNICH* and other witty thrillers; this script, which they wrote with Wolfgang Wilhelm, has the same basic ingredients. But without a Hitchcock or a Reed to supply style and terror, the results seem too consciously clever. The musical score and the attitudes are a little arch, a little condescending. It's pleasant enough, but unexciting; its only spark is from Kerr, who's fresh and lovely, with full pouty young lips. The hero, Trevor Howard, has nothing to do but follow her around, adoringly; Raymond Huntley plays the Nazi who recruits her. .

Advise and Consent

US (1962): Political
139 min, No rating, B&W

Mindless "inside" story of Washington political shenanigans, directed by Otto Preminger. Accused of having been a Communist, Leffingwell (Henry Fonda), the nominee for Secretary of State, perjures himself. A senator (Don Murray) is victimized because of a homosexual episode in his past. (When he goes to a gay bar, it's such a lurid, evil place that the director seems grotesquely straight.) There are noteworthy performances by Burgess Meredith, as Leffingwell's accuser, and by

Franchot Tone, as the President; Charles Laughton is entertainingly flamboyant as a Southern senator. With Lew Ayres as the Vice-President, and Walter Pidgeon, Gene Tierney, Peter Lawford, Paul Ford, George Grizzard, Inga Swenson, Will Geer, Betty White, and some actual Washington personages. The procession of people helps to take one's mind off the overwrought melodrama. Wendell Mayes adapted Allen Drury's best-seller. Columbia.

The African Queen

US (1951): War/Romance/Adventure
105 min, No rating, Color

An inspired piece of casting brought Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn together. This is a comedy, a love story, and a tale of adventure, and it is one of the most charming and entertaining movies ever made. The director, John Huston, has written that the comedy was not present either in the novel by C.S. Forester or in the original screenplay by James Agee, John Collier, and himself, but that it grew out of the relationship of Hepburn and Bogart, who were just naturally funny when they worked together. Hepburn has revealed that the picture wasn't going well until Huston came up with the inspiration that she should think of Rosie as Mrs. Roosevelt. After that, Bogart and Hepburn played together with an ease and humor that makes their love affair-the mating of a forbidding, ironclad spinster and a tough, gin-soaked riverboat captain-seem not only inevitable, but perfect. The story, set in central Africa in 1914, is so convincingly acted that you may feel a bit jarred at the end; after the lovers have brought the boat, the African Queen, over dangerous rapids to torpedo a German battleship, Huston seems to stop taking the movie seriously. With Robert Morley as Hepburn's missionary brother, and Peter Bull. Cinematography by Jack Cardiff. Bogart's performance took the Academy Award for Best Actor. (Peter Viertel, who worked on the dialogue while the company was on location in Africa, wrote White Hunter, Black Heart-one of the best of all moviemaking novels-about his experiences with Huston.) Produced by Sam Spiegel, for United Artists.

After Hours

US (1985): Comedy
97 min, Rated R, Color

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