**Classic Cinema Movie Descriptions**

**11 May. The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie. 1969**. Directed by Ronald Neame. Based on the novel by Muriel Spark. Maggie Smith won the Best Actress Oscar for her role as Miss Brodie. She is a complex character, a headstrong teacher at the Marcia Blaine School for girls in 1930s Edinburgh. She frequently declares herself to be “in her prime”, a progressive teacher at a conservative school. The supporting cast are great too. On the film’s release in 1969, Vincent Canby in the New York Times wrote: “Miss Smith’s performance is a staggering amalgam of counter-pointed moods, switches in voice level and obliquely stated emotions, all of which are perfectly right.”

**25 May. Cabaret. 1972**. Directed by Bob Fosse. Cabaret, set in 1931 Berlin, won Oscars for Best Directing, Best Actress and Best Actor in a Supporting Role, and the BAFTA for best film. Liza Minnelli’s performance as Sally Bowles is one of the great performances of musical cinema, she is the star turn at the Kit Kat Klub. Added to the brew is Brian (Michael York) a student from Cambridge University, Maximilian (Helmut Griem), a wealthy playboy and the sinister MC (Joel Grey- Oscar winner). The film is based on the stage show and the Berlin stories about pre-war Berlin by Christopher Isherwood. On the 50th anniversary of the film’s release, Peter Bradshaw in the Guardian wrote: “Minnelli brings the razzle dazzle to a Berlin determined to ignore the gathering storm in this cinematic masterpiece.” 5 stars. Guy Lodge 2022, Film of the Week: “It still feels fresh and daring, expanding the possibilities of what musicals can say at every turn …”

**22 June. Notorious. 1946**. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. This year’s Classic Cinema Hitchcock film. One of his best. Beautiful black and white cinematography. A World War 2 psychological espionage thriller that moves from Miami to Rio. Starring Ingrid Bergman, Cary Grant and Claude Rains. Nigel Andrew in The Financial Times: “It’s completely hypnotic from the twisting strands of plot defying us to fully trust anyone, to those Hitchcock specials, the shots where the camera is a lethal conspiracist.” Peter Bradshaw in the Guardian in 2009 gave Notorious five stars and wrote, “Ingrid Bergman is magnificent alongside Cary Grant in this brilliantly crafted, lethally elegant thriller, stylish and grippingly well told.”

**29 June. Zorba the Greek. 1964**. Directed by Michael Cacoyannis and adapted from the novel by Nikos Kazantzakis. Starring Anthony Quinn, Alan Bates and Irene Papas. The film centres around the contrast between the inhibited Englishman, Basil, Alan Bates, and the full of life lusty Greek, Zorba, Anthony Quinn. They meet when Basil goes to Crete to inspect an abandoned mine his father owns. The music by Mikis Theodorakis is glorious (Zorba’s dance).

When the film opened, Bosley Crowther in the New York Times wrote: “ If ever the abundance of life force in man has been poured forth on the screen - and goodness knows, many efforts to do so have been made over the years - it is done in the brilliant performance given by Anthony Quinn in the title role of the film…” Zorba was filmed mostly on Crete and captures the look of the island, the crowded villages, the rocky shoreline and the sun baked hills.

**13 July. Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. 1953**. Directed by Howard Hawks. One of the very best of the musical comedies from the Golden Age of Hollywood. In glorious Technicolor. Starring Jane Russell and Marilyn Monroe in the role that made her a Hollywood star. Lorelie (Monroe) and Dorothy (Russell) are showgirls sailing to Paris - a handsome private detective and a wealthy older man (James Coburn) are along for the ride. Well known songs, such as A Little girl from Little Rock, Ain’t there Anyone Here for Love and Diamonds are a Girls Best Friend, and dancing. Monroe and Russell are an exceptional pair showing a heartfelt female friendship, incredible in juxtaposition. “Russell is worldly, amused intensely in touch: Monroe is sublimely unfocused and beatific - A joy”, Peter Bradshaw, the Guardian, 2010. Gentlemen Prefer Blonds is an iconic Classic movie with a clever story and cheeky humour. Sophisticated entertainment.

**27 July. The Innocents.1961**. Directed by Jack Clayton. Based on the Henry James novella The Turn of the Screw. Gothic screenplay masterminded by Truman Capote. Miss Giddens (Deborah Kerr) is engaged to be the governess of two orphaned children, Flora and Miles, by their uncle.  She is charged with taking care of their education and welfare at the uncle’s country estate, the Victorian mansion, Bly House, with the strict instruction to not contact him about anything. Mark Kermode, 2013, in the Guardian, on the Innocents re- release said,” Jack Clayton’s shimmering gem is a masterclass in suggestion, a flawless evocation of the uncanny which pits the subconscious against the supernatural.” Philip French, the Observer, 2005: “It’s masterly in every way with a great performance by Deborah Kerr as the troubled Victorian governess, superb black - and- white cinematography by Freddie Francis (CinemaScope) and George Auric’s last, truly distinguished score.” An entrancing and entertaining ghost story, mysterious goings-on in an enormous Victorian mansion.

**10 August. All About Eve.1950**. Directed by Joseph L Mankiewicz. The film was multi award winning. It received a record 14 Oscar Nominations; both its stars Bette Davis and Anne Baxter were nominated for Best Actress. The film won Oscars for Best Picture, Best Directing and Best Supporting Actor (George Sanders as the cynical theatre critic). It also won the BAFTA for Best Picture. Bette Davis is Margot Channing an aging Broadway star and Anne Baxter is Eve Harrington an ambitious young fan who insinuates herself into Margot’s life with turbulent results. Roger Ebert, 2005, wrote: “Her (Bette Davis) veteran actress, Margot Channing, in All About Eve was her greatest role; it seems to show her defeated by the wiles of a younger actress, but in fact marks a victory: the triumph of personality and will over the superficial power of beauty. She never played a more autobiographical role.” Anthony Quinn in The Independent, 2007,

“… the script fizzes with one liners and epigrams.” A very funny smart film with wonderful performances from the entire cast.

**24 August. The Leopard. 1963**. Directed by Luchino Visconti. Starring Burt Lancaster, Claudia Cardinale and Alain Delon. Adapted from the novel by di Lampedusa. Cannes Palm d’Or 1963. The film presents Garibaldi’s invasion of Sicily in the 1860’s through the eyes of the noble Salina family. This invasion was part of the unification (Risorgimento) of Italy and the consequent social changes and modernisation of Italy. Burt Lancaster is the Leopard, Don Fabrizio the Prince of Salina. Lancaster thought it was his “best work”. Penelope Gilliatt wrote of The Leopard: “It gives you an extraordinarily sense of the texture of a grand family’s life in Sicily during the Risorgimento … Visconti is a Marxist and a Count from one of the oldest families in Italy. No one could be better fitted to know about the attitude of Lampedusa’s hero.” Andrew Sarris 2005 in The Observer:” One of the greatest motion pictures of all time, as well as one of the most politically profound.” The Leopard is a sweeping epic, magnificent, rich and beautiful. To be seen on the big screen. NOTE: film starts at 3 pm.

 **7 September. The Grapes of Wrath. 1940**. Directed by John Ford. With Henry Fonda (as Tom Joad, one of the great American movie characters), Jane Darwell, John Carradine and adapted from the Pulitzer Prize winning novel by John Steinbeck. The film had 7 Oscar nominations and won two, Best Director and Best Supporting Actress (Jane Darwell).  The story is the Joad family’s trek from the Dust Bowl through New Mexico and Arizona to California to find the promised land, the American dream, work, good wages and a decent place to live. Roger Ebert wrote about the film: “It expressed the nations rage about the Depression in poetic, Biblical terms, and its dialogue does a delicate little dance around words like ‘agitators’ and ‘Reds’- who are, we are intended to understand, what fat cats call anyone who stands up for the Little Man.” Still as relevant as it ever was. The struggles of the working poor, a subject revisited in the recent film Nomad land. Frank Nugent, NY Times, 2003, “The Grapes of Wrath is just about as good as any picture has the right to be.” Cinematography by Greg Toland who went on to photographing Citizen Kane.

**21 September. Two for the Road. 1967**. Directed by Stanley Donen (Singing in the Rain). Starring Albert Finney and Audrey Hepburn. Music by Henry Mancini. A witty screenplay by Frederic Raphael (Oscar nominated). We see two people meet, marry and grow. An emotionally honest reflection on a marriage; when they first met, courtship, set against a road trip through France, a trip they had made together ten years earlier. The film was shot on location with the backdrop of the French countryside.  Mark Harris, Film Comment, 2017: “Donen has made a movie for adults and it remains one of the finest of its genre and its era.” Anastasia Brown in Dreams of the Screen, 2022, “Donen’s Two for the Road can be seen as one of the greatest and certainly the strongest love story in cinema.” The film is very entertaining, great performances, beautiful locations and an honest interpretation of a married relationship.