

DRAMAS, COMEDIES, MUSICALS & WESTERNS:

Witness for the Prosecution, by Billy Wilder, 1957 (U.S.). Crime thriller. B&W. 116 min. Hotshot lawyer Sir Wilfrid Robarts (Charles Laughton) agrees to defend Leonard Vole (Tyrone Power) when the unemployed inventor is accused of murdering a rich widow (Norma Varden). Surprise after surprise ensues when his wife (Marlene Dietrich) is scheduled to testify. Based on a play by Agatha Christie. 6 Oscar nominations, including Best Actor, Best Picture & Best Director. DGA Award for director Wilder. Golden Globe for supporting actress Elsa Lanchester + 4 nominations. IMDB: 8.3/10. Maltin: 4/4 stars.

Murder on the Orient Express, by Sidney Lumet, 1974 (U.K.). Murder mystery. Color. 128 min. A passenger aboard the Orient Express (Richard Widmark) is murdered shortly after telling Belgian sleuth Hercule Poirot (Albert Finney) he has received death threats. An honest-to-goodness all-star cast shines in Agatha Christie's whodunit based on the Lindbergh kidnapping. Oscar for Ingrid Bergman + 5 nominations, including Best Actor and Best Adapted Screenplay; DGA nomination for Director Lumet. IMDB: 7.3/10 stars; Maltin: 3/4 stars.

Chicago, by Rob Marshall, 2002 (U.S.-Germany). Musical. Color. In English and Hungarian. 113 min. Murderesses Velma Kelly (Catherine Zeta-Jones) and Roxie Hart (Renee Zellweger) find themselves on death row together and fight for the fame that will keep them from the gallows in 1920s Chicago. Richard Gere, Queen Latifah, John C. Reilly costar. 6 Oscars, including Best Picture and Best Supporting Actress, + 7 nominations. Grammy for Best Soundtrack, + nomination for Best Song. IMDB: 7.2/10 stars; Maltin: 3/4 stars.

Silverado, by Lawrence Kasdan, 1985 (U.S.). Western. Color. **133 min.** In the Old West, a bunch of misfits (Kevin Kline, Kevin Costner, Danny Glover, Scott Glenn) come together to fight corruption and injustice in a small frontier town. Brian Dennehy, John Cleese, Jeff Goldblum, Linda Hunt costar. Oscar nominations for Best Sound and Best Score. IMDB: 7.0/10 stars; Maltin: 3/4 stars.

BACKUP: ***Secondhand Lions***, by Tim McCanlies, 2003 (U.S.). Comedy / Drama / Family. Color. 109 min. A coming-of-age story about a shy boy (Haley Joel Osment) sent by his irresponsible mother (Kyra Sedgwick) to spend the summer with his wealthy, eccentric uncles (Robert Duvall, Michael Caine) in Texas. IMDB: 7.5/10 stars. Maltin: 5/10 stars.

BACKUP: ***The Straight Story***, by David Lynch, 1999 (U.K.-France-U.S.). Adventure/Biography/ Drama. Color. 112 minutes. Chronicles a trip made by 73-year-old Alvin Straight (Richard Farnsworth) from Laurens, Iowa, to Mt. Zion, Wis., in 1994 aboard a lawn mower. The man undertook his strange journey to mend his relationship with his ill, estranged, 75-year-old brother Lyle (Harry Dean Stanton). Oscar nomination for Best Actor. 2 Golden Globe nominations. IMDB: 8.0/10 stars. Maltin: 3.5/4 stars.

BACKUP: *The Ladykillers*, by Alexander MacKendrick, 1955 (U.K.). Crime comedy. Color. 91 min. Five oddball bank robbers rent an apartment in London from an octogenarian widow (Katie Johnson). They tell her they are an amateur string quintet and would like to use the rooms to practice. Alec Guinness, Peter Sellers star. 1 Oscar nomination. IMDB: 8.0/10 stars. Maltin: 3.5/4 stars.

BACKUP: *Blazing Saddles*, by Mel Brooks, 1974 (U.S.). Western comedy. 93 min. Color. To ruin a western town so he can exploit the land for a railroad, a corrupt political boss (Harvey Korman) appoints a black sheriff (Cleavon Little). With help from the local saloonkeeper (Oscar nominee Madeline Kahn), the sheriff and an alcoholic gunslinger (Gene Wilder) turn the tables on him. 3 Oscar nominations, including Best Original Song (sung by Frankie Laine). IMDB: 7.8/10 stars. Maltin: 3.5/4 stars.

BACKUP: *Cabaret*, by Bob Fosse, 1972 (U.S.). Drama / Musical / Romance. Color. 124 min. In 1930s Berlin, an entertainer (Liza Minelli) at a risqué nightclub romances two men, an idealistic young Englishman (Michael York) and a wealthy German playboy-politician (Helmut Griem) as the Nazi Party rises to power. Under the ironic eye of the Master of Ceremonies (Joel Grey), the decadent, heedless carousel of life at the Kit-Kat Klub keeps spinning faster and faster, until.... 8 Oscars + 2 nominations. DGA nomination for Director Fosse. 3 Golden Globes + 6 nominations. IMDB: 7.8 stars. Maltin: 3.5/4 stars.

FOREIGN FILMS:

Chushingura, by Hiroshi Inagaki, 1962 (Japan). Color. 100 or 108 min. In Japanese. Often referred to as the Japanese *Gone With the Wind*, this is Japan's national epic. A young lord attempts to combat the official corruption endemic to the Shogunate, only to be placed in an impossible conflict of duties. The conflict of obligations is the essential dilemma of Japanese society. Worth seeing just for the supremely gorgeous art works, buildings and costumes of 18th century Japan. *Chūshingura* ranks among the most familiar of all stories in Japan. IMDB: 7.8/10 stars. Maltin: 3.5/4 stars.

The Wages of Fear, by Henri-Georges Clouzot, 1953 (France). Action/Drama/Thriller. B&W. In French, English, Spanish, Italian, German & Russian. 131 min. In the South American jungle supplies of nitroglycerene are needed at a remote oil field. A tense rivalry develops between the two sets of drivers and on the rough remote roads the slightest jolt can result in death. IMDB: 8.3/10 stars. Maltin: 3.5/4 stars.

King of Masks, by Tian-Ming Wu, 1996 (China-Hong Kong). Drama. Color. 91 min. In Mandarin. Solitary Bianlian Wang, an aging street performer known as the King of Masks for his gifted female impersonations, would rather have a male heir than a shot at the big time with the Sichuan Opera. So he buys an 8-year-old orphan boy from a slave trader. Later, Wang gets a nasty surprise, and complications ensue. IMDB: 7.3/10 stars. Maltin: 3.5/4 stars.

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, by Vittorio De Sica, 1963 (Italy-France). Romantic comedy. Color. 119 min. Trilogy of stories about three very different women (all played by Sophia Loren) and the men (all played by [Marcello Mastroianni](#)) they attract. Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. Golden Globe nomination for Samuel Goldwyn Award. IMDB: 7.3/10 stars. Maltin: 4/4 stars.

BACKUP: *Z*, by Costa-Gavras, 1969 (France-Algeria). Political thriller. Color. 127 min. Fictionalized account of the overthrow of the democratic government in Greece. Following the murder of a prominent leftist, an investigator (Yves Montand) tries to uncover the truth while government officials try to cover up their roles. 2 Oscars, including Best Foreign Film + 3 nominations. DGA nomination for director Costa-Gavras. Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film. IMDB: 8.1/10 stars. Maltin: 3/4 stars.

BACKUP: *Zelary*, by Andrej Trojan, 2003 (Czech Republic-Slovakia-Austria). Romantic drama. Color. In Czech, Russian and German. 150 min. A nurse and her surgeon-lover are part of a resistance movement in 1940s Czechoslovakia. When they are discovered, he flees and she must find a place to hide. A patient whose life she saved, agrees to hide her as his wife. Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film. IMDB: 7.6/10 stars. Maltin: 6.0/10 stars.

DOCUMENTARIES:

The Ten-Year Lunch: The Wit and Legend of the Algonquin Round Table, by Aviva Slesin, 1987 (USA). Comedy. Color and B&W. 56 min. Profile of the group of writers and humorists who formed lasting friendships and collaborations centered on their daily lunches at New York City's Algonquin Hotel through the 1920s, which led to scathing satire of cultural and social trends of the Roaring '20s. Their conflicts and romances are explored, with central figures including Dorothy Parker and Alexander Woollcott. Oscar for Best Documentary. 1 Emmy nomination. IMDB: 9.0/10 stars.

BACKUP: *Man on Wire*, by James Marsh, 2008 (U.S.-U.K.). Documentary in English and French. 104 min. Color. The story of tightrope walker Philippe Petit's daring, but illegal, high-wire routine performed between New York City's World Trade Center's twin towers in 1974, what some consider, "the artistic crime of the century." Oscar for Best Documentary. DGA Award nomination for director Marsh. Audience Award and Grand Jury Prize at Sundance. IMDB: 8.0/10 stars. Maltin: 8/0/10 stars.