

ROMANCE &  
ROUGH STUFF  
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## VIDEORELEASES

The following films are scheduled for release on video this month. Though based on the latest available information, these listings are subject to change [and not all stores carry all videos]. For a guide to Cinedex and MPAA ratings, see our masthead on page three.

### Air America [2.9]

Comedy: Action, War

1990, Color, 112 minutes [R: violence, language]

**Director:** Roger Spottiswoode

**Cast:** Mel Gibson, Robert Downey Jr., Nancy Travis, David Marshall Grant, Lane Smith

**Review:** An otherwise silly premise is handled deftly by Spottiswoode and company to provide light yet solid escapist fare: Downey is the rookie pilot drafted for unofficial airlifts during the Viet Nam War, and Gibson is the veteran who puts up with the rookie's idealistic questions. "Air America" never realizes hilarity, but it remains consistent throughout, creating an absurd reality that rings true, and provides Gibson and Downey enough opportunities to exercise their expert comic timing.

**Release Date:** 21 February 1991

### Chicago Joe and the Showgirl [2.8]

Drama: Character Study

1990, Color, 105 minutes [R]

**Director:** Bernard Rose

**Cast:** Keifer Sutherland, Emily Lloyd, Patsy Kensit

**Review:** Reminiscent of "Badlands" and "Bonnie and Clyde," "Chicago Joe" presents a young man and woman whose chance meeting leads to very serious thrill seeking. Set in World War II London, it's the dubious reputation of Joe (Sutherland) that excites and motivates the showgirl (Lloyd). This true story is primarily a lightweight character study that slowly reveals the emotional make up of the two leads. The absence of powerful revelations in the script leaves "Chicago Joe" only mildly entertaining, except for several exceptionally amusing situations that arise from the characters' peculiar predicaments.

**Release Date:** 07 February 1991

### Cinema Paradiso [3.7]

Comedy/Drama: Character Study

1988, Color, 123 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** Giuseppe Tornatore

**Cast:** Philippe Noiret, Jacques Perrin, Salvatore Cascio, Mario Leonardi, Agnese Nano, Leopoldo Trieste

**Review:** A splendid script affords the director and cast every opportunity to breath real life into this village community which revolves around the local motion picture theater. It's there that a young boy named Toto, completely fascinated with the cinema, strikes a friendship with the projectionist and learns the trade. This is not a quickly paced film and may be slow at times for some, but the leads and supporting ensemble are tightly bound by the movie house, a dramatic premise that is a loving tribute to the cinema on behalf of audiences everywhere.

**Note:** In Italian with English subtitles. Winner of the Academy Award for Best Foreign Picture.

**Release Date:** 06 February 1991

### The Court-Martial of Jackie Robinson [3.3]

Drama: Biography

1990, Color, 094 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** Larry Peerce

**Cast:** Andre Braugher, Daniel Stern, Ruby Dee, Stan Shaw, Paul Dooley, Bruce Dern

**Review:** This historical drama is an important footnote to U.S. history, serving as a 20th century follow-up to "Glory" [Edward Zwick, 1989]. The film presents the events leading up to and the World War II experience of Jackie Robinson (best known for being the first black player in major league baseball). His confrontation with racial prejudice in the military, leading up to the inevitable title proceeding, is standard stuff heightened by sensitive writing and superb acting. Originally filmed for television, the non-cinematic work remains powerful for its story and for its performances.

**Release Date:** 28 February 1991

### Darkman [1.8]

Drama: Action, Fantasy

1990, Color, 096 minutes [R: violence, language]

**Director:** Sam Raimi

**Cast:** Liam Neeson, Frances McDormand, Colin Fries, Larry Drake, Nelson Mashinta

**Review:** Raimi has carefully and thoroughly set up his dramatic components based on a traditional code, only to quickly toss the code out the window. Neeson plays a scientist attempting to discover a formula for synthetic flesh. As he's on the verge of a breakthrough, he crosses paths with some gangsters (tied into local politics) who all but murder Neeson and destroy his laboratory.



■ **COVER:** ROXANNE's Steve Martin longs for the romance found by Humphrey Bogart and Audrey Hepburn in *SABRINA*. Photos courtesy of RCA/Columbia Home Video and Paramount Home Video, respectively.

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## ■ REVIEWS & RATINGS

Most reviews and ratings of recent titles are based on theatrical screenings, including original running time. CineGuide film ratings in this issue (appearing in brackets following film titles) are based on our Cinedex System, a 0-5 scale:

- 5.0 Absolute perfection
- 4.0 Archive material
- 3.0 Recommended
- 2.5 Average
- 2.0 Below average
- 1.0 No redeeming value

Civilized disagreement is par for the course, and Cinedex ratings and reviews are intended only as guides. We encourage readers to express their point of view (see below, under "How to Contact Us").

When available, Motion Picture Association of America theatrical ratings are included, along with warning lines:

- G General Audiences
- PG Adult guidance suggested
- PG-13 May be unsuitable for under 13
- R May be unsuitable for under 18
- NC-17 For adults only

## ■ SUBSCRIPTIONS

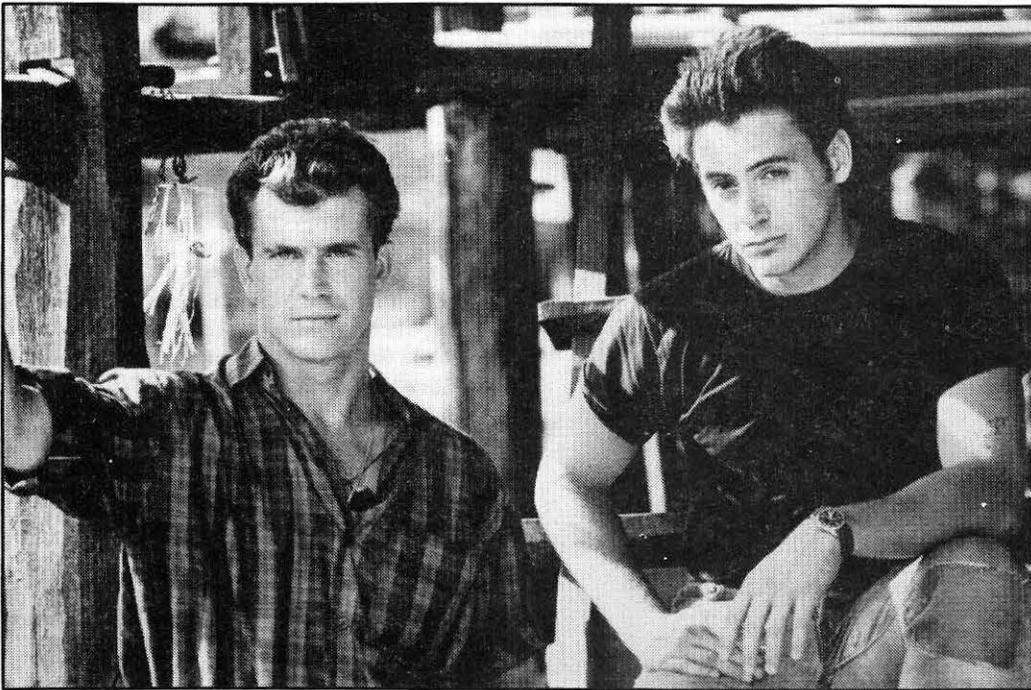
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Mel Gibson and Robert Downey Jr. look ready for action in February's video release, "Air America." ©1990 TRI-STAR PICTURES.

Believed to be dead, the scientist sets up shop in an abandoned factory and, using the efforts of his research, seeks his revenge. Director Raimi inadequately sets up that premise, and that damages everything that follows. In the first place, being an innocent victim isn't enough to earn our faith or sympathy. In that light, the fact that Darkman undertakes brutal revenge (instead of justice and the American way) is a violation of all good guy ethics. Raimi may have meant this to appear as the actions of a tragic individual, the ultimate irony that Darkman's private sense of justice is as violent as are his enemies. His supposed heroics are instead a comic book movie gone wrong. Perhaps "Darkman" is someone the popular audience can cheer on, but the more sensitive, critical filmgoer will be disappointed.  
**Release Date:** 14 February 1991

### **Days of Thunder [2.3]**

Drama: Character Study, Romance  
1990, Color, 107 minutes [PG-13]

**Director:** Tony Scott

**Cast:** Tom Cruise, Robert Duvall, Randy Quaid, Nicole Kidman, Cary Elwes

**Review:** Cruise holds his own in this film that has little overall worth. He plays a car racing hot dog with a hot head to match. Despite those negative qualities, his natural talents help him to overcome the antagonism he creates on and off the track. That's about as full as the plot gets, leaving plenty of room for character development which never occurs. Duvall especially makes up for the lack of scripted substance, and Scott's direction of racing scenes is absorbing. If you're a true Cruise fan, you're sure to enjoy his performance despite the story flaws.

**Release Date:** 07 February 1991

### **Death Warrant [NOT REVIEWED]**

Drama: Action  
1990, Color, 090 minutes [R]

**Director:** Deran Sarafian

**Cast:** Jean-Claude Van Damme, Robert Guillaume, Cynthia Gibb, George Dickerson, Patrick Kilpatrick, Art LaFleur, Abdul Salaam El Razzac

**Release Date:** 27 February 1991

### **The Endless Game [2.6]**

Drama: 1990, Color, 123 minutes [PG-13]

**Director:** Bryan Forbes

**Cast:** Albert Finney, George Segal, Kristen Scott Thomas, Derek De Lint, Monica Guerritore, Ian Holm, John Standing, Anthony Quayle, Nanette Newman

**Review:** Strong leads and intriguing plot points help to spice up this otherwise monotonous presentation. The storyline behind writer-director Forbes' script involves a British intelligence agent (Finney) investigating the death of a fellow spy (also his mistress). As the top cast member, Finney is commanding as always, though the script affords him only the subtlest shading of character. The continual conflict of his search is simple survival in the world of espionage: spies and double spies are everywhere and, as Finney explains, trust is not in their professional vocabulary. The wooden presentation by Forbes does allow Segal to stand out in an untypically colorful role as a dangerous but unidentified player in the game.

**Note:** Originally made for cable broadcast, this work contains the final performance of Anthony Quayle.

**Release Date:** 28 February 1991

**CONTINUED**

**A Fight for Jenny [1.8]**

Drama: 1986, Color, 100 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** Gilbert Moses

**Cast:** Lesley Ann Warren, Philip Michael Thomas, Jaclyn-Rose Lester, Jean Smart, Lynne Moody, Barbara Montgomery, Drew Snyder, William Atherton

**Review:** Taken from a true story, this account of the circumstances surrounding a custody battle is reminiscent of "The Good Mother." Warren is the mom here who, with her daughter, leads a contented life until she meets Thomas. Their interracial relationship sets up the conflict of this work, yet it takes over half the film to reach it and then it's handled in the most shallow way possible. Neither lead is given much to do by the script, and the direction is as static as a white on white painting.

**Note:** Originally made for television and released on video four years later.

**Release Date:** 28 February 1991

Sutherland, the film delivers an absorbing story, hampered by a poor plot choice and an unsatisfactory ending.

**Release Date:** 13 February 1991

**I Come in Peace [3.0]**

Drama: Action/Fantasy

1990, Color, 091 minutes

[R: violence, strong language, brief nudity]

**Director:** Craig R. Baxley

**Cast:** Dolph Lundgren, Brian Benben, Betsy Brantley, Matthias Hues, Jay Bilas

**Review:** "I Come in Peace" is a good, old action flick with a little bit of snappy dialogue to boot. It even manages to throw in sideplots—involving a coroner girlfriend, the local crime boss, and the corruption of justice—without gumming up the simple premise: an alien drug dealer comes to earth in search of a rare enzyme. For better or for worse, he's also pursued by an alien narc. That leaves a local cop and an FBI agent to protect the interests of earthlings everywhere. That ridiculous premise does require you to suspend your belief in reality, but it will reward you for doing so. Lundgren appears awkward at times, but he overcomes it in the end. Benben is an added pleasure as Lundgren's partner and foil. The only true knock to give this film is its gratuitous use of swearing.

**Release Date:** 06 February 1991

**Mr. Frost [NOT REVIEWED]**

1990, Color, 092 minutes [R]

**Director:** Philip Setbon

**Cast:** Jeff Goldblum, Alan Bates, Kathy Baker, Roland Giraud

**Release Date:** 13 February 1991

**Quick Change [2.9]**

Comedy: 1990, Color, 088 minutes [R: language]

**Director:** Howard Franklin, Bill Murray

**Cast:** Bill Murray, Geena Davis, Randy Quaid, Jason Robards

**Review:** "Quick Change" is a brisk, consistent winner, it's only shortcoming being its inability to produce a huge guffaw. That aside, the script (about a gang of bank robbers who, after pulling off a caper, can't seem to get out of town) is clever and witty, lifted above average by virtuoso playing: Murray is hilarity understated; Quaid essentially portrays Murray's alter ego, dim and exaggerated; and Davis is the solid and steady glue to hold them together.

**Release Date:** 20 February 1991

This tender scene between Keifer Sutherland and Julia Roberts is uncharacteristic of "Flatliners."  
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**Flatliners [2.5]**

Drama: Fantasy/Science Fiction

1990, Color, 111 minutes [R: language, violence]

**Director:** Joel Schumacher

**Cast:** Kiefer Sutherland, Kevin Bacon, Julia Roberts, William Baldwin, Oliver Platt

**Review:** The premise about inducing death and then reviving the patient to recall his "other side" experience is made just believable enough, the first challenge built into this science fiction fantasy bordering on the ridiculous. Schumacher does make you buy it, and builds the terror slowly. The major weakness here is the lack of substantial characters, an element Bacon and Roberts could have put to good use. Even so, with a solidly grim portrayal by

## State of Grace [2.8]

Drama: Social Commentary, Character Study  
1990, Color, 134 minutes [R: violence, strong language, nudity, adult themes]

**Director:** Phil Joanou

**Cast:** Sean Penn, Gary Oldman, Ed Harris, Robin Wright, John Turturro

**Review:** This film remains compelling despite the complete absence of expected elements: the characters are not ones to gain our sympathy, nor are they especially fascinating; there is no real plot, in terms of progression, for our interest to follow; and none of the characters experience a significant change. What's left after that? A tightly directed work of strong performances. Sean Penn portrays a matured hood who returns to his neighborhood (New York's Hell's Kitchen) and his increasingly powerful hoodlum friends. If that framework of a gritty, violent and crude world, expressed through equally powerful direction and acting, appeals to you, "State of Grace" will prove worth watching.

**Release Date:** 28 February 1991

## The Take [NOT REVIEWED]

Drama: 1990, Color, 100 minutes

**Director:** Leon Ichaso

**Cast:** Ray Sharkey, Lisa Hartman, Larry Manetti, R. Lee Ermey, Joe Lala, Julio Mechoso

**Note:** Originally made for cable television.

**Release Date:** 14 February 1991

## Taking Care of Business [2.0]

Comedy: 1990, Color, 108 minutes

[R: language, adult themes & situations]

**Director:** Arthur Hiller

**Cast:** James Belushi, Charles Grodin, Anne DeSalvo, Loryn Locklin, Stephen Elliott, Hector Elizondo, Veronica Hamel, Mako, Gates McFadden

**Review:** Grodin is a high-powered ad executive whose book of credit cards and sensitive data is discovered by fugitive Belushi. Belushi then temporarily assumes Grodin's identity while the latter is constantly one step behind finding his alter ego. This sounds like solid formula material, but "Taking Care," simply put, just isn't very funny. Belushi makes every effort to add a little pepper, and Grodin turns in his usual performance of underplayed timing—all to no avail. Hiller's tired direction only points out the missing jokes. There's a spaghetti sauce commercial that when paraphrased sums up the faulty script: "It's not in there."

**Release Date:** 06 February 1991

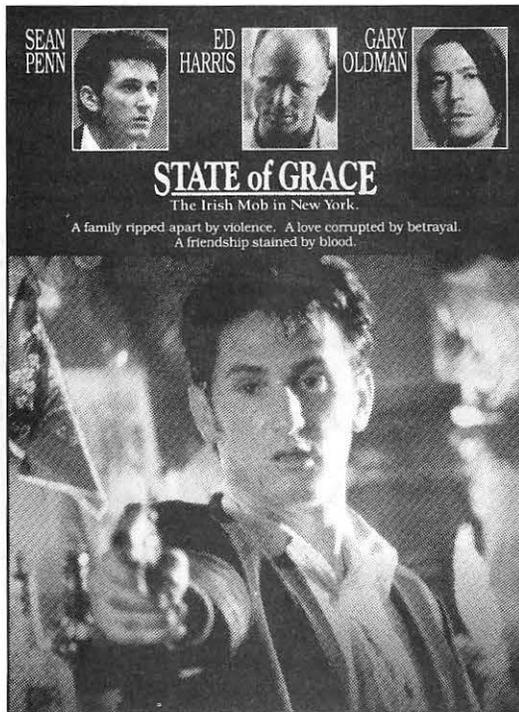
## The Two Jakes [2.1]

Drama: Detective Mystery, 1990, Color, 128 minutes  
[R: language, violence, adult situations]

**Director:** Jack Nicholson

**Cast:** Jack Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Meg Tilly, Madeleine Stowe, Eli Wallach, Perry Lopez, David Keith

**Review:** "The Two Jakes" is a far more sensible name than "Chinatown II," for this is certainly no carbon copy of the 1974 film. This go-round, again scripted by Robert Towne, contains all the necessities: a murder mystery revolving around



shady real estate deals and mineral rights, with intrigue, betrayal, hidden motives, etc. What is lacking is a little color or life. Nicholson, portraying the cynical private detective J.J. Gittes, seems almost withdrawn in his performance, and the supporting roles are written with little imagination (Keitel does respectably well considering). Nicholson's direction is, however, especially good though slowly paced—which may owe more to the script than to the camera. It might help if you've seen the original, but probably not enough. Then again, an appreciation for the original makes this sequel a poor second outing.

**Note:** Preceded by "Chinatown" [1974].

**Release Date:** 28 February 1991

## The Witches [2.8]

Drama, 1990, Color, 092 minutes [PG]

**Director:** Nicolas Roeg

**Cast:** Jasen Fisher, Mai Zetterling, Anjelica Huston, Rowan Atkinson, Bill Paterson, Brenda Blethyn, Charlie Potter

**Review:** "The Witches" is a small-scale fairy especially suited for the family. It tells the story of a young boy who, after learning almost everything there is to know about witches from his grandmother, runs into a virtual convention of witches. Needless to say, there are many dangers when he gets caught up in the center of their activities and tries to foil their plans. The film sets up a simple but absorbing tale, though Roeg's handling lacks panache. For example, Huston is given the juicy role of the high exalted witch, yet her best scene is played behind layers of latex. That sort of presentation dulls things up, but "The Witches" still remains entertaining for the family: the script is consistently witty, and it's easy to tell the good guys from the bad guys.

**Release Date:** 13 February 1991

## VIDEORELEASES

### ALTERNATE TITLES

Here are some further films to consider when looking through this month's new releases:

#### AIR AMERICA

Combining comedy and drama in the military:

- The Last Detail
- Mash
- Stalag 17

#### CHICAGO JOE AND THE SHOWGIRL

Character studies of love and crime:

- Badlands
- Bonnie & Clyde
- Love Me or Leave Me

#### CINEMA PARADISO

Filmmakers looking at filmmakers:

- Day For Night
- 8-1/2
- Singin' in the Rain

#### DARKMAN

Heroes and fantasies:

- Batman
- RoboCop
- Superman

#### FLATLINERS

Man, life, death, & science fiction:

- Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde [1932, 1941]
- The Fly [1958, 1986]
- Frankenstein [1931]
- The Incredible Shrinking Man

#### I COME IN PEACE

Strangers in a strange world:

- Cocoon
- Escape From New York
- My Stepmother is an Alien
- Predator
- Total Recall

#### QUICK CHANGE

The lighter side of larceny:

- The Brink's Job
- Dollars
- Family Business
- The Freshman
- My Blue Heaven

#### STATE OF GRACE

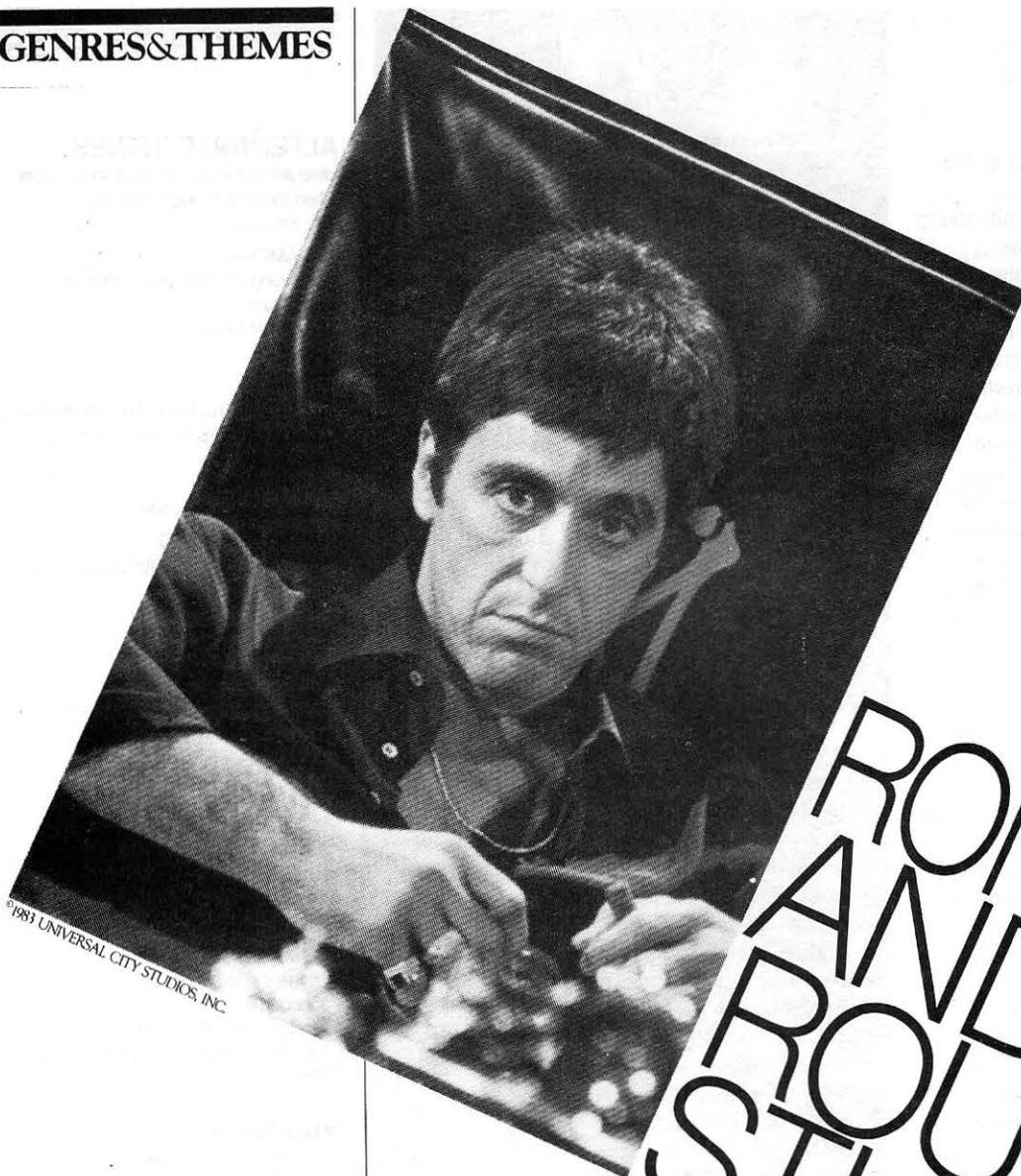
Big city crime:

- Mean Streets
- The Godfather
- The Godfather, Part II
- High Sierra
- King of the Gypsies

#### THE TWO JAKES

Detective stories:

- The Big Sleep [1946]
- Chinatown
- The Maltese Falcon



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# ROMANCE AND ROUGH STUFF

# FEBRUARY 14

means two things in Chicago, the metropolitan base for CineGuide: St. Valentine's Day and the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. In a case of mistaken identity, 14 members of Bugs Moran's North Side gang were shot to death in a bloodbath targeting Moran himself—except he never showed up. Needless to say, the little warehouse on North Clark Street gained some national press in 1929.

That mobster milestone admittedly puts a bit of an edge on a day traditionally reserved for cozy sentiment, but it does extend your film choices if you're looking for a theme. In other words, you don't have to settle for *Wuthering Heights* (although it's hard to do much better in the tragic romances department).

So we're presented with two categories for February that are among the oldest in the cinema, themes that just won't quit. There are certainly hundreds of old reliables under each heading.

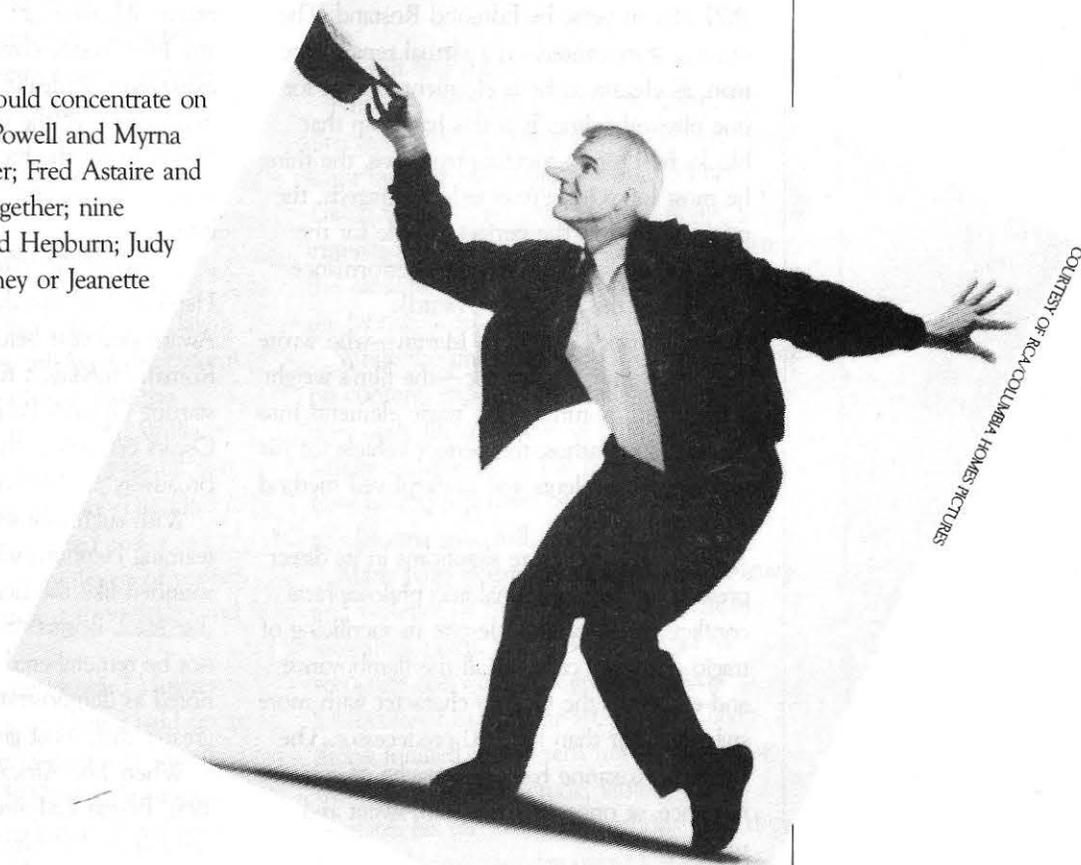
## ■ Back to the basics

For love interest, you could concentrate on romantic teams: William Powell and Myrna Loy made 12 films together; Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, 10 films together; nine appearances with Tracy and Hepburn; Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney or Jeanette

Macdonald and Nelson Eddy or Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon or Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland, each pair in eight films; or even the seven movies starring Bette Davis and George Brent.

On the gangster side, there's a world of hurt to choose from. The basics begin with any number of Warner Bros. classics that defined the category, such as *Little Caesar*, *Public Enemy*, *The Roaring Twenties* and *High Sierra*.

As audiences became more sophisticated, production codes slackened, leading to contemporary entries that define the present-day equivalents to former standards: *When Harry Met Sally*, *The Year of Living Dangerously*, *Pretty Woman* and *Stanley & Iris* represent romance in various forms; *The Godfather*, *The Getaway*, *Family Business* and *My Blue Heaven* are today's answers to the



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**Opposite Page:** Al Pacino turns Michael Corleone inside-out in "Scarface," a film of accelerating brutality. **This Page:** Steve Martin stars in "Roxanne," a charming re-interpretation of the earlier "Cyrano de Bergerac" with more flair than the original.

best of George Raft and Edward G. Robinson. (Dare we not mention Roger Corman's own *St. Valentine's Day Massacre*?)

Somewhere between those early trend setters and today's standards, the cinema produced countless efforts that link the forms of yesterday and today. Some of the successes are better known than others, yet many fall into the realm of overlooked contributions. Not all of the following will prove significant in the history of film, but each title is worthy of your consideration when looking for bouquets or bullets on February 14.

■Romance and the unexpected lead:

*Roxanne*

After a string of light films, mostly irreverent comedies, Steve Martin stepped into the top role in *Roxanne* [1987, Fred Schepisi], beautifully delivering a romantic lead much to the surprise of his harshest critics.

The film is a remake of the 1950 *Cyrano de Bergerac* which in turn was taken from the 1897 play in verse by Edmond Rostand. The original story centers on a virtual renaissance man, as elegant as he is eloquent, except for one physical failing. It is this handicap that blocks him for discovering true love, the thing he most longs for. Presented as a tragedy, the original film was the perfect vehicle for the "serious" actor Jose Ferrer (his performance gained him the Academy Award).

At the hands of Steven Martin—who wrote the screenplay for *Roxanne*—the film's weight is lightened by turning the tragic elements into comedy and pathos, the perfect vehicle for his own comedic talents and underplayed method of drama.

The original is more significant in its direct presentation of emotional and philosophical conflicts, yet *Roxanne*, despite its sacrificing of tragic elements, captures all the flamboyance and energy of the *Cyrano* character with more style and flair than its 1950 predecessor. The resultant *Roxanne* has the panache of great romance, at once amorous, sad, sweet and uplifting.

■Romance and the unexpected lead:

*Sabrina*

Four years after the original *Cyrano*, an unexpected romantic team of Audrey Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart proved that offbeat casting can work wonders.

In Billy Wilder's 1954 film, *Sabrina* is a chauffeur's daughter (Hepburn) whose attraction for the rich family's youngest son (William Holden) jeopardizes family business. In steps older brother Lionel (Bogart) who attempts to fix the situation by courting Sabrina himself.

As most of Billy Wilder's comedies, *Sabrina* offers a blend of elements, including a timely view of United States culture. The film lightly criticizes the generalized mentalities of the upper and working classes, as well as big business. The underlying sentiment though is as old as the hills—what should a romantic comedy be about if not "love conquers all?"

Hepburn was the perfect choice for Sabrina, a character who must evolve from an awkward adolescent to a stunning woman, practically overnight (to become as striking as any 1954 *Vogue* cover). Hepburn's unique expression of idealistic innocence imprisoned in a woman of the world was made to order. She provides the lifeblood of the film: wide-eyed, romantic and alluring, all in the same bite.

No matter her naive screen personality, Hepburn had already received the Academy Award one year before for William Wyler's *Roman Holiday*, a romantic comedy co-starring Gregory Peck. Six weeks following the Oscars ceremony, she received a Tony for her Broadway performance in *Ondine*.

With such momentum going for her, teaming Hepburn with Bogart probably sounded like the height of miscasting first discussed. Bogart's *Sabrina* performance should not be remembered as his best, but should be noted as demonstrating a range that was greater than most give him credit for.

When *The African Queen* was released in 1951, Bogart had already proven his romantic capabilities, but only in roles as exceptional men. With Katharine Hepburn, under the direction of John Huston, Bogart delivered a very real human being in a film that was at once an adventure and a love story, earning

him his first and only Oscar. In 1954, Bogart again stretched his film image in the truly romantic *Sabrina*. Not only did he offer an acceptable love interest to the much younger Audrey Hepburn, but his character was typically American corporate stuff (his greatest adventure being keeping tabs on his playboy little brother).

Bogart realized his *Sabrina* role with grace and charm, words unknown to critics when reviewing his previous films. In actuality, he was returning to his Broadway roots when he played various, unimportant juvenile and romantic leads during the 1920s. (It's very easy to imagine a dashing presence achieved by a youthful Bogart given the audience's distance in a proscenium theater.) His Hollywood break changed that, however, when his role as Duke Mantee in *The Petrified Forest* [Archie Mayo, 1936] tagged him as a tough guy, anti-hero. It took him 11 years and the creation of his own production company before he could begin to play ordinary men.

*Sabrina* is strong on all fronts, the culmination of clever, intelligent scripting, strong direction of narrative, and especially fine acting. The film indulges in the youthful discovery of love, both for the spritful Sabrina and for her seasoned suitors.

### ■Tough, tougher, toughest

#### *Scarface*

Two years after the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, Warner Bros. followed the pattern of its own 1930 *Little Caesar* with the controversial *Public Enemy* [1931, William Wellman], establishing once and for all that gangster films were here to stay. The film turned Cagney's career around and transcended the pre-existing levels of realism in film, especially pertaining to violence and crime.

At the same time, the Howard Hughes production of *Scarface* was being held up at the Hays Office for its violent and sexual content. Released in 1932, it set a new standard for explicit depiction of gangsters (loosely based on Al Capone), although the moral remains the same. When viewed today, the intellect can still appreciate the explosive content while the dialogue and acting come



The teaming of Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn produced several romantic classics including "The Philadelphia Story" and "Holiday." The pair is seen here in a moment of doubt from "Bringing Up Baby."

COURTESY OF TURNER HOME ENTERTAINMENT

off as stiff and dated.

Fifty-one years later, Brian De Palma directed a 1983 remake of *Scarface* from a script by then little-known Oliver Stone. Taking the original's premise only as an inspirational guide, they crafted the tale into the ultimate realization of "live by the sword, die by the sword."

While the first version seems to concentrate on content, exposing the audience to previously unseen views of crime, the latter is strictly a challenge of the popular art form: how far can a pattern be taken, built like an accelerating snowball, until it explodes?

Many have negatively criticized the language and violence of this film for going past the saturation point. Such comments fail to recognize the work as a great, technical achievement of popular art. Writer Oliver Stone fulfilled the pattern never realized by the 1932 original: a crude, violent man escalates his own ruthless methods until they in turn destroy him. By over-blowing the character's outrageous aspects, Stone is only more thoroughly completing the pattern established in the first 20 minutes. Every



*The Untouchables*: Andy Garcia, Sean Connery, Kevin Costner and Charles Martin Smith.  
 ©1987 PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION

aspect of this film emphasizes this treatment, from the direction of De Palma to the performance of Pacino. It remains an incredibly brutal work to watch, but if you can accept that as part of the art form, you may appreciate the film as the ultimate fulfillment to an artistic and technical challenge.

De Palma and Stone do indeed create one of the most excessive cycles of violence ever filmed. The film is emotionally violent throughout, containing harsh language and ferocious action. The pattern escalates for nearly three hours until it erupts with the fury of pure chaos. The proof of this achievement lies in the ending that is undeniably preposterous when viewed on its own, yet achieves the irrefutable culmination of the film in its entirety.

Pacino already had two *Godfather* movies behind him when he took on the updated Tony Montana in the remake. With a reputation for extreme performances (either underplayed as in *The Godfather* or blown out in *And Justice for All*), Pacino took the opportunity to turn his Michael Corleone inside-out, openly exposing every contemptible human trait possible. His characterization would be outlandish in almost any other

framework, but is the essential component to the film's ever heightening savagery.

The work is also notable for early glimpses at Michelle Pfeiffer (*The Witches of Eastwick*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, *The Fabulous Baker Boys*) and F. Murray Abraham (*Amadeus*, *The Name of the Rose*, *An Innocent Man*).

De Palma's 1987 *The Untouchables* is equally appropo for recommending, starring Kevin Costner, Sean Connery (who won the Best Supporting Oscar) and Robert De Niro in the story of federal agent Elliott Ness' relentless hounding of Al Capone.

■ **Flipsides of love: upbeat, downbeat**  
*Chances Are*, *A Star is Born*

The silliest of premises supplies the basis for *Chances Are* [Emile Ardolino, 1989], a romantic comedy that is wonderful escapist stuff.

The plot reads ridiculously, but works just fine on celluloid (or video tape): the spirit of a widow's (Cybill Shepherd) husband returns in the body of a much younger man (Robert Downey Jr.) who tries to apprise her of the situation. At the same time, the widow's daughter falls for Downey who becomes very confused. And that's not to mention the loyal

friend of the family (Ryan O'Neal) who's love for Shepherd goes back to when the husband was still living.

Few films approach fantasy in a real-life setting, and *Chances Are* successfully blends comedy and romance into the genre. The essential tone is light and sweet throughout, with initial credit going to the script by Perry and Randy Howze. At any point they could have easily turned the work into a cinematic situation comedy suffering from an antique formula. The plot choices are instead fresh and lively, allowing the film to gently float along.

Downey's chronic innocence is the crucial characteristic, working as a guiding light for the other performers. Shepherd, O'Neal and Masterson follow suit, maintaining the movie's lightly worn feeling of fantasy. The cast works well together in capturing the audience, making them accept this fairy tale environment, and keeping them there.

The other side of romance, its dark side, can be witnessed in various tragedies. Ill-fated lovers come in many shapes and sizes from the classic *Romeo and Juliet* to the sweeping feel of saga in the aforementioned *Wuthering Heights*.

In 1937, director William Wellman created a classic film of tragic romance in the real world. His story inspired two remakes that cannot weaken the strength of his original.

*A Star is Born* is known to present-day audiences in its 1976 interpretation starring Barbra Streisand and Kris Kristofferson. Many more film authorities point with pleasure to George Cukor's 1954 version co-starring Judy Garland and James Mason. Wellman's original yet remains untouched, and as powerful as any film today in expressing the frailty of the human being.

Janet Gaynor heads a superb cast in the story of Esther Victoria Blodgett, an innocent girl of the great plains who dreams of being a movie star (even with a name like that). Her dream comes true through exceptional circumstances, aided by a former matinee idol whose own star comes crashing down as quickly as hers ascends. She falls in love with her mentor (Fredric March), and together they struggle to endure the pressures of her success and his demise.

The film's centerpiece is Gaynor, but March steals the show as her ill-fated lover. His presence is pure magic in his every scene, and it is on his behalf that the audience takes the story to heart.

*A Star is Born* is extraordinary not only for March, but also for its supporting talent that nails every comedic and poignant beat. The best of characters were on hand including Adolphe Menjou, Lionel Stander, Andy Devine and May Robson. (A further note should be made on behalf of one the earliest achievements of effective technicolor.)

#### ■ The old reliable

There is one quintessential St. Valentine's film that is impossible to avoid: Billy Wilder's *Some Like it Hot* [1952]. Beginning with the all-important title card, "Chicago—1929," it traces the mad dash of two musicians who accidentally witness the massacre. Wilder and co-writer I.A.L. Diamond masterfully wed snappy dialogue, slapstick and screwball comedy with romance, a little bit of gangsters and suspense. Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon create one of the best co-star teams in the history of the cinema, joined by Marilyn Monroe. Few films can surpass the pacing of this non-stop comedy which properly pays its tribute in the casting of supporting roles with George Raft and Pat O'Brien.

**THE END**

The Cinedex is an alphabetical index to current releases & major film references in this issue. For a guide to Cinedex and MPAA ratings, please see our masthead on page three.



□**The Adventures of Ford Fairlane** [NOT REVIEWED]

Comedy: 1990, Color, 100 minutes [R]

**Director:** Renny Harlin

**Cast:** Andrew Dice Clay, Wayne Newton, Priscilla Presley, Morris Day, Robert Englund, Ed O'Neill

□**Air America** [2.9]

Comedy: Action, War

1990, Color, 112 minutes [R: violence, language]

**Director:** Roger Spottiswoode

**Cast:** Mel Gibson, Robert Downey Jr., Nancy Travis, David Marshall Grant, Lane Smith

**Synopsis:** A newly recruited pilot (Downey), drafted for unofficial U.S. airlifts of food, arms and drugs during the Viet Nam War, discovers the absurdity of the situation and tries to convince another pilot (Gibson) in "doing the right thing."

□**The Big Sleep** [3.8]

Drama: Detective Mystery, Romance

1946, B&W, 114 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** Howard Hawks

**Cast:** Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, John Ridgely, Martha Vickers, Louis Jean Heydt, Regis Toomey, Peggy Knudsen, Dorothy Malone, Elisha Cook Jr

**Synopsis:** Raymond Chandler's private detective Phillip Marlowe goes to work for a wealthy man whose two daughters are anything but innocent. The case begins as a matter of blackmail, but quickly turns into missing persons, murder, and romance.

**Note:** Remade with Robert Mitchum as Marlowe in 1978.

□**Chances Are** [3.1]

Drama: Fantasy, Romance

1989, Color, 108 minutes [PG: Adult theme]

**Director:** Emile Ardolino

**Cast:** Robert Downey Jr., Cybill Shepherd, Ryan O'Neal, Mary Stuart Masterson, Christopher McDonald, Josef Sommer, Joe Grifasi, Susan Ruttan, Fran Ryan, James Noble

**Synopsis:** What if a young man gained the memories of his reincarnated spirit? And what if he ran into his wife and daughter from that former life? Well, you got your man (Downey), you got your spirit, and you got a pretty confused romance.

□**Chicago Joe and the Showgirl** [2.8]

Drama: Character Study, 1990, Color, 105 minutes [R]

**Director:** Bernard Rose

**Cast:** Keifer Sutherland, Emily Lloyd, Patsy Kensit

**Synopsis:** Reminiscent of "Badlands" and "Bonnie and Clyde," the chance meeting of a young man and woman leads to very serious thrill seeking (set in World War II London and based on a true story).

□**The China Lake Murders** [NOT REVIEWED]

Drama: 1989, Color, 089 minutes [PG-13]

**Director:** Alan Metzger

**Cast:** Tom Skerritt, Michael Parks, Nancy Everhard, Lauren Tewes

□**Chinatown** [4.0]

Drama: Film Noir Detective Mystery

1974, Color, 131 minutes

[R: adults themes, situations, violence]

**Director:** Roman Polanski

**Cast:** Jack Nicholson, Faye Dunaway, John Huston, Perry Lopez, Burt Young, John Hillerman, Diane Ladd

**Synopsis:** Suckered into a phony adultery job, 1930s private detective Jake Gittes (Nicholson) is determined to solve the case—despite the subject's mysterious wife (Dunaway), powerful father-in-law (Huston), and the political bosses in 1930s Los Angeles.

**Note:** Best Screenplay Oscar winner. Followed by "The Two Jakes" [1990].

□**Cinema Paradiso** [3.7]

Comedy/Drama: Character Study

1988, Color, 123 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** Guiseppe Tornatore

**Cast:** Philippe Noiret, Jacques Perrin, Salvatore Cascio, Mario Leonardi, Agnese Nano, Leopoldo Trieste

**Synopsis:** This tribute to film is expressed through the story of Toto, a young boy fascinated by the local movie house, and his friendship with the theater's projectionist.

**Note:** In Italian with English subtitles. Winner of the Academy Award for Best Foreign Picture.

□**The Court-Martial of Jackie Robinson** [3.3]

Drama: Biography, 1990, Color, 094 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** Larry Pearce

**Cast:** Andre Braugher, Daniel Stern, Ruby Dee, Stan Shaw, Paul Dooley, Bruce Dern

**Synopsis:** Before the baseball great crossed the color line in the major leagues, he challenged the segregation of the U.S. Army. Based on real events.

□**Darkman** [1.8]

Drama: Action, Fantasy

1990, Color, 096 minutes [R: violence, language]

**Director:** Sam Raimi

**Cast:** Liam Neeson, Frances McDormand, Colin Friels, Larry Drake, Nelson Mashinta

**Synopsis:** An innocent scientist (Neeson), *should* have been dead at the hands of political gangsters. Instead, he returns to seek vengeance aided by the fruits of his research.

□**Days of Thunder** [2.3]

Drama: Character Study, Romance

1990, Color, 107 minutes [PG-13]

**Director:** Tony Scott

**Cast:** Tom Cruise, Robert Duvall, Randy Quaid, Nicole Kidman, Cary Elwes

**Synopsis:** A natural, hot-shot drag racer (Cruise) is looking to prove a lot to himself as he takes on the new challenge of stock car racing.

□**Death Warrant** [NOT REVIEWED]

Drama: Action

1990, Color, 090 minutes [R]

**Director:** Deran Sarafian

**Cast:** Jean-Claude Van Damme, Robert Guillaume, Cynthia Gibb, George Dickerson, Patrick Kilpatrick, Art LaFleur, Abdul Salaam El Razzac

**Synopsis:** Van Damme portrays a detective who poses as an inmate to discover who's behind a series of brutal prison murders.

□**Delta Force 2** [1.5]

Drama: Action

1990, Color, 106 minutes [R: violence, strong language]

**Director:** Aaron Norris

**Cast:** Chuck Norris, Billy Drago, John P. Ryan, Richard Jaeckel, Begonia Piazza

**Synopsis:** Follow up to the 1986 original, the Force, a top secret military strike force (funded by invisible purse strings) is called in to aid the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency to bring the world's biggest drug lord to justice.

□**Dick Tracy** [2.1]

Drama: Action, Romance, 1990, Color [PG: adult themes]

**Director:** Warren Beatty

**Cast:** Warren Beatty, Glenn Headly, Al Pacino, Madonna, Charlie Korsmo, Mandy Patinkin, Charles Durning, Paul Sorvino, William Forsythe, Seymour Cassel, Dustin Hoffman, Dick Van Dyke, Catherine O'Hara, James Caan, Michael J. Pollard, Estelle Parsons

**Synopsis:** From the pages of the Chicago Tribune, policeman Tracy (Beatty) is after Big Boy Caprice (Pacino), while torn between his reliable girl and a mobster's flame.

□**Die Hard 2** [3.0]

Drama: Action, 1990, Color [R: violence, language]

**Director:** Renny Harlin

**Cast:** Bruce Willis, Bonnie Dedelia, William Atherton, Reginald Veljohnson, Franco Nero, William Sadler, John Amos

**Synopsis:** When mercenaries seize control of Dulles International Airport, a visiting cop from L.A. (Willis) takes it upon himself to save the day—and the plane his wife is coming in on.

**Note:** Preceded by "Die Hard" (1988).

□**The Endless Game** [2.6]

Drama: 1990, Color, 123 minutes [PG-13]

**Director:** Bryan Forbes

**Cast:** Albert Finney, George Segal, Kristen Scott Thomas, Derek De Lint, Monica Guerritore, Ian Holm, John Standing, Anthony Quayle, Nanette Newman

**Synopsis:** A British intelligence agent investigates the death of his fellow spy and lover amongst a host of agents and double-agents.

**Note:** Originally made for cable broadcast, this work contains the final performance of Anthony Quayle.

□**A Fight for Jenny** [1.8]

Drama: 1986, Color, 100 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** Gilbert Moses

**Cast:** Lesley Ann Warren, Philip Michael Thomas, Jaclyn-Rose Lester, Jean Smart, Lynne Moody, Barbara Montgomery, Drew Snyder, William Atherton

**Synopsis:** From a true story about an interracial relationship that leads to a custody battle for a little girl.

**Note:** Originally made for television and released on video four years later.

□**Flatliners** [2.5]

Drama: Fantasy/Science Fiction

1990, Color, 111 minutes [R: language, violence]

**Director:** Joel Schumacher

**Cast:** Kiefer Sutherland, Kevin Bacon, Julia Roberts, William Baldwin, Oliver Platt

**Synopsis:** A group of med students delves into "post-life" experience by temporarily inducing death and then bringing the patient back to life. The dangers inherent in the experiments themselves are only the beginning...



□**The Freshman** [2.6]

Comedy: 1990, Color, 102 minutes [PG: language]

**Director:** Andrew Bergman

**Cast:** Matthew Broderick, Marlon Brando, Bruno Kirby, Penelope Ann Miller, Frank Whaley

**Synopsis:** A young man (Broderick) looks forward to his college career and life in the big city until a relationship with a potential crime boss (Brando) turns his world up-side-down.

□**The Gamble** [1.3]

Drama/Comedy: Adventure, 1990, Color, 108 minutes [R]

**Director:** Carlo Vanzina

**Cast:** Matthew Modine, Faye Dunaway, Jennifer Beals

**Synopsis:** When a young man (Modine) discovers that his father has lost everything in a bet to a notorious woman (Dunaway), he wagers his life against her winnings.



□**Ghostdad** [2.5]

Comedy: Fantasy, 1990, Color [PG: language]

**Director:** Sidney Poitier

**Cast:** Bill Cosby, Kimberly Russell, Denise Nicholas, Ian Bannen

**Synopsis:** An executive who's always on the run (Cosby) gets a second chance to do right by his family when he mysteriously re-materializes after a traffic accident.

□**Gremlins 2: The New Batch** [2.5]

Comedy: Fantasy, 1990, Color [PG-13: violence, language]

**Director:** Joe Dante

**Cast:** Zach Galligan, Phoebe Cates, John Glover, Robert Prosky, Robert Picardo, Christopher Lee

**Synopsis:** Through several twists of fate, an unprecedented horde of gremlins invades a corporate office building. Their threat is accelerated when they discover the genetics laboratory and take advantage of its R&D facilities.

**Note:** Preceded by "Gremlins" (1984).

□**Henry V** [2.8]

Drama: 1989, Color, 137 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** Kenneth Branagh

**Cast:** Kenneth Branagh, Derek Jacobi, Brian Blessed, Alec McCowen, Ian Holm, Richard Briers, Robert Stephens, Robbie Coltrane, Christian Bale, Paul Scofield

**Synopsis:** Adaptation of Shakespeare's play about the "warrior-king," outnumbered in a conflict with France.

□**High Desert Kill** [1.5]

Drama: Fantasy, 1990, Color, 093 minutes [PG-13: language]

**Director:** Harry Falk

**Cast:** Marc Singer, Anthony Geary, Micah Grant, Chuck Connors

**Synopsis:** Three friends on a hunting expedition meet up with a professional hunter who informs them that all the area's game has been frightened away. Soon the friends themselves begin to behave strangely, and they seek to understand their predicament.

□**I Come in Peace** [3.0]

Drama: Action/Fantasy, 1990, Color, 091 minutes

[R: violence, strong language, brief nudity]

**Director:** Craig R. Baxley

**Cast:** Dolph Lundgren, Brian Benben, Betsy Brantley, Matthias Hues, Jay Bilas

**Synopsis:** The war on drugs gains an inter-galactic perspective when an alien dealer comes to earth with an alien policeman in hot pursuit—it's up to vice cop Caine (Lundgren) and his newly assigned FBI partner to save the day.

□**Klute** [3.5]

Drama: Mystery, Character Study

1971, Color, 114 minutes [R]

**Director:** Alan J. Pakula

**Cast:** Jane Fonda [AA], Donald Sutherland, Charles Cioffi, Roy Scheider, Dorothy Tristan, Rita Gam, Jean Stapleton

**Synopsis:** An habitual callgirl (Fonda) is the all-important key in a private investigator's (Sutherland) search for a missing husband.

# THECINEDEX

## ■CURRENT RELEASES

New releases currently available  
[in alphabetical order]:

- The Adventures of Ford Fairlane
- The China Lake Murders
- Delta Force 2
- Dick Tracy
- Die Hard 2
- The Freshman
- The Gamble
- Ghostdad
- Gremlins 2: The New Batch
- Henry V
- High Desert Kill
- Last Exit to Brooklyn
- Longtime Companion
- Mo' Better Blues
- My Blue Heaven
- Navy Seals
- Problem Child
- Robocop 2
- Short Time
- Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!
- Tom Apart
- Young Guns II

CONTINUED

## COMING SOON:

In order by release date:

### Cinema Paradiso

06 FEBRUARY 1991

### I Come in Peace

06 FEBRUARY 1991

### Taking Care of Business

06 FEBRUARY 1991

### Chicago Joe and the Showgirl

07 FEBRUARY 1991

### Days of Thunder

07 FEBRUARY 1991

### Flatliners

13 FEBRUARY 1991

### Mr. Frost

13 FEBRUARY 1991

### The Witches

13 FEBRUARY 1991

### Darkman

14 FEBRUARY 1991

### The Take

14 FEBRUARY 1991

### Quick Change

20 FEBRUARY 1991

### Air America

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### Jackie Robinson

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### The Endless Game

28 FEBRUARY 1991

### A Fight for Jenny

28 FEBRUARY 1991

### State of Grace

28 FEBRUARY 1991

### The Two Jakes

28 FEBRUARY 1991

### Arachnophobia

06 MARCH 1991

### Wild at Heart

06 MARCH 1991

### After Dark My Sweet

07 MARCH 1991

### Pump Up the Volume

13 MARCH 1991

### White Hunter, Black Heart

13 MARCH 1991

### Dreams

20 MARCH 1991

### Buried Alive

21 MARCH 1991

### Henry and June

21 MARCH 1991

### Narrow Margin

21 MARCH 1991

### White Palace

21 MARCH 1991

### Presumed Innocent

27 MARCH 1991

### Funny About Love

28 MARCH 1991

### The Hot Spot

28 MARCH 1991

### Sibling Rivalry

11 APRIL 1991

### □Last Exit to Brooklyn [2.4]

Drama: Character Study, 1990, Color, 103 minutes

[R: language, violence, adults situations, nudity]

Director: Uli Edel

Cast: Jennifer Jason Leigh, Burt Young, Ricki Lake, Jerry Orbach

Synopsis: Set in post-WWII Brooklyn, waterfront locals struggle to attain their own idea of happiness against mounting odds: a dock worker's strike, competitive prostitutes, young hoods, and a sub-culture of social misfits.

### □Longtime Companion [3.3]

Drama: Character Study, 1990, Color, 096 minutes

Director: Norman Rene

Cast: Stephen Caffrey, Patrick Cassidy, Brian Cousins, Bruce Davison, John Dossett, Mark Lamos, Dermot Mulroney, Mary-Louise Parker, Michael Schoeffling, Campbell Scott, Robert Joy

Synopsis: The impact of AIDS is measured through the experience of a small group of friends over a ten-year period.

### □The Maltese Falcon [4.2]

Drama: Detective Mystery

1941, B&W, 100 minutes [Not Rated]

Director: John Huston

Cast: Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, Peter Lorre, Sydney Greenstreet, Ward Bond, Barton MacLane, Jerome Cowan  
Synopsis: Private detectives Spade (Bogart) and Archer are duped into a simple tail job that leads to the murder of Archer. Before Spade knows it, Archer's alleged killer dies, and Spade is led to a web of thieves who will do anything for the black bird.

Note: *Huston's directing debut and Greenstreet's talkie appearance.*

### □Mo' Better Blues [3.7]

Drama: Character Study

1990, Color, 129 minutes [R: adult situations, language]

Director: Spike Lee

Cast: Denzel Washington, Spike Lee, Wesley Snipes, Giancarlo Esposito, Robin Harris, Joie Lee, Cynda Williams

Synopsis: The life and times of a trumpeter (Washington) and his peers are chronicled: friends, loyalty, business, gambling, womanizing and jazz.

### □Mr. Frost [NOT REVIEWED]

1990, Color, 092 minutes [R]

Director: Philip Setbon

Cast: Jeff Goldblum, Alan Bates, Kathy Baker, Roland Giraud

### □My Blue Heaven [3.0]

Comedy: Character Study

1990, Color [PG-13: language, adult themes]

Director: Herbert Ross

Cast: Steve Martin, Rick Moranis, Joan Cusack, Carol Kane  
Synopsis: Vinnie, a New York hood (Martin), is placed in the federal witness protection program. Relocated to suburbia, Vinnie has a tough time readjusting, but he just might be able to teach a few things to the FBI agent assigned to his case (Moranis).

### □Navy Seals [1.8]

Drama: Action

1990, Color, 113 minutes [R: Violence, language]

Director: Lewis Teague

Cast: Michael Biehn, Charlie Sheen, Joanne Walley-Kilmer, Rick Rossovich, Bill Paxton

Synopsis: The elite special task force discovers stolen U.S. missiles during a rescue operation. Despite administrative flack, they undertake tracking down the missiles and destroying them.

### □Problem Child [1.7]

Comedy: 1990, Color, 081 minutes [PG]

Director: Dennis Dugan

Cast: John Ritter, Amy Yasbeck, Michael Oliver, Michael Richards, Gilbert Gottfried, Jack Warden

Synopsis: A childless couple adopts a 7-year-old who turns out to be their worst nightmare. Does the orphanage have a return policy?



### □Quick Change [2.9]

Comedy: 1990, Color, 088 minutes [R: language]

Director: Howard Franklin, Bill Murray

Cast: Bill Murray, Geena Davis, Randy Quaid, Jason Robards

Synopsis: Pulling off an ingenious bank robber is easy. The difficult part for the gang is trying to steal themselves out of New York.

### □Robocop 2 [2.2]

Drama: Action, Fantasy, 1990, Color [R: language, violence]

Director: Irvin Kershner

Cast: Peter Weller, Nancy Allen, Daniel O'Herlihy

Synopsis: Sequel to the 1987 film. In its takeover attempt of Detroit, the firm that invented the title cyborg (part human, part machine) re-programs him for ineffectiveness. At the same time, the company develops a new robocop from a criminal mind.

### □Roxanne [3.8]

Comedy: Romance

1987, Color, 107 minutes [PG: adult themes]

Director: Fred Schepisi

Cast: Steve Martin, Daryl Hannah, Shelley Duvall, Michael J. Pollard, Fred Willard

Synopsis: Contemporary Cyrano de Bergerac tale is set in modern day ski town. The erudite fire chief (Martin) must live without love due to one, failing; he therefore helps to win the affection of the woman he loves for another man.

Note: *Remake of the 1950 "Cyrano de Bergerac."*



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□**Sabrina** [3.8]

Comedy: Romance, 1954, B&W, 113 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** Billy Wilder

**Cast:** Audrey Hepburn, Humphrey Bogart, William Holden, Walter Hampden, John Williams, Martha Hyer, Joan Vohs, Marcel Dalio, Francis X. Bushman, Nancy Kulp

**Synopsis:** The chauffeur's daughter is romanced by the rich family's eldest son to keep her from his playboy kid brother.

□**Scarface** [4.2]

Drama: 1983, Color, 170 minutes

[R: adult themes, situations, violence, language]

**Director:** Brian De Palma

**Cast:** Al Pacino, Steven Bauer, Michelle Pfeiffer, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Robert Loggia, Miriam Colon, F. Murray Abraham, Paul Shenar

**Synopsis:** Contemporary remake of 1932 film: a Cuban refugee settles in Miami where he begins his meteoric and violent career in drug trafficking.

**Note:** *The 1932 original starred Paul Muni and was directed by Howard Hawks for Howard Hughes.*

□**Short Time** [2.9]

Comedy: Character Study, 1990, Color, 100 minutes [PG-13]

**Director:** Gregg Champion

**Cast:** Dabney Coleman, Matt Frewer, Teri Garr, Barry Corbin, Joe Pantoliano

**Synopsis:** When a cop with less than a week to retirement (when his police insurance will also expire) is diagnosed with a fatal disease, he suddenly becomes very heroic.

□**Some Like It Hot** [3.6]

Comedy: Screwball, Romance

1959, B&W, 122 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** Billy Wilder

**Cast:** Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis, Marilyn Monroe, George Raft, Nesimiah Pershoff, Mike Mazurki

**Synopsis:** Two musicians witness the 1920s gangland slaughter, the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. With the hoods on their trail, they disguise themselves as women and join a female band headed for a Florida resort.

**Note:** *Oscar for Best Costumes went to Orry-Kelly.*

□**A Star is Born** [3.9]

Drama: Romance

1937, Color, 111 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** William Wellman

**Cast:** Janet Gaynor, Fredric March, Adolphe Menjou, Andy Devine, Lionel Stander

**Synopsis:** A naive, young woman seeks fame and fortune in Hollywood. She finally realizes her hopes and fears when she meets and falls in love with a major box office star who is also a self-destructive alcoholic.

**Note:** *Academy Award winner for Best Original Story (Carson and Wellman), and Best Cinematography (W. Howard Greene) for this early Technicolor film.*

□**State of Grace** [2.8]

Drama: Social Commentary, Character Study

1990, Color, 134 minutes

[R: violence, strong language, nudity, adult themes]

**Director:** Phil Joanou

**Cast:** Sean Penn, Gary Oldman, Ed Harris, Robin Wright, John Turturro

**Synopsis:** Terry Noonan left New York's Hell's Kitchen years ago, without explanation, without goodbyes. Now he's back, and taking up with the friends who have become powerful, and the girlfriend who disdains his criminal way of life.

□**The Take** [NOT REVIEWED]

Drama: 1990, Color, 100 minutes

**Director:** Leon Ichaso

**Cast:** Ray Sharkey, Lisa Hartman, Larry Manetti, R. Lee Ermey, Joe Lala, Julio Mechoso

**Note:** *Originally made for cable television.*

□**Taking Care of Business** [2.0]

Comedy: 1990, Color, 108 minutes

[R: language, adult themes & situations]

**Director:** Arthur Hiller

**Cast:** James Belushi, Charles Grodin, Anne DeSalvo, Loryn Locklin, Stephen Elliott, Hector Elizondo, Veronica Hamel, Mako, Gates McFadden

**Synopsis:** High-powered exec Spencer (Grodin) loses his credit cards and other data, which is found by con-on-the-run Jimmy (Belushi). Parallel adventures then follow: Jimmy has the best of fortune, and Spencer has a real losing streak.

□**The Thin Man** [4.0]

Comedy/Drama: Detective Mystery, Romance

1934, B&W, 90 minutes [Not Rated]

**Director:** W.S. Van Dyke

**Cast:** William Powell, Myrna Loy, Maureen O'Sullivan, Nat Pendleton

**Synopsis:** A retired private detective (Powell), spending Christmas in New York, is pressured into solving a murder mystery by the press, the police, the suspects, and even his own wife.

**Note:** *Followed by "After the Thin Man" (1936), "Another Thin Man" (1939), "Shadow of the Thin Man" (1941), "The Thin Man Goes Home" (1944), and "Song of the Thin Man" (1947).*

□**Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!** [3.0]

Black Comedy: 1990, Color, 105 minutes [NC-17]

**Director:** Pedro Almodovar

**Cast:** Antonio Banderas, Victoria Abril

**Synopsis:** A newly released mental patient courts the love of his life (a pornographic film queen) by kidnapping her.

□**Torn Apart** [2.0]

Drama: Romance, Social Commentary

1990, Color, 95 minutes [R]

**Director:** Jack Fisher

**Cast:** Adrian Pasdar, Cecilia Peck, Makram Khoury, Arnon Zadok, Margrit Polak, Michael Morim, Amos Lavi, Hanna Azulai, Barry Primus

**Synopsis:** An Israeli and Arab fall in love in this Romeo and Juliet tale where the parents are really entire cultures at war.

□**The Two Jakes** [2.1]

Drama: Detective Mystery

1990, Color, 128 minutes

[R: language, violence, adult situations]

**Director:** Jack Nicholson

**Cast:** Jack Nicholson, Harvey Keitel, Meg Tilly, Madeleine Stowe, Eli Wallach, Perry Lopez, David Keith

**Synopsis:** A sequel to "Chinatown," set in late 1940s Los Angeles. When gumshoe Gittes (Nicholson) leads his client to the adulterous wife, an unexpected shooting reveals a mystery of shady real estate deals, mineral rights, and pre-meditated murder.

**Note:** *Preceded by "Chinatown" [1974].*

□**The Witches** [2.8]

Drama, 1990, Color, 92 minutes [PG]

**Director:** Nicolas Roeg

**Cast:** Jasen Fisher, Mai Zetterling, Anjelica Huston, Rowan Atkinson, Bill Paterson, Brenda Blethyn, Charlie Potter

**Synopsis:** A grandmother's advise regarding evil witches turns out to be a timely warning.

□**Young Guns II** [2.4]

Drama: Western

1990, Color [PG-13: violence, language]

**Director:** Geoff Murphy

**Cast:** Emilio Estevez, Kiefer Sutherland, Lou Diamond Phillips, Christian Slater, William Petersen

**Synopsis:** This sequel finds the Billy the Kid-Arkansas Dave gang thinking of going straight. Unfortunately, powers in the Southwest hire the kid's friend, Pat Garrett, to hunt him down.

THE END

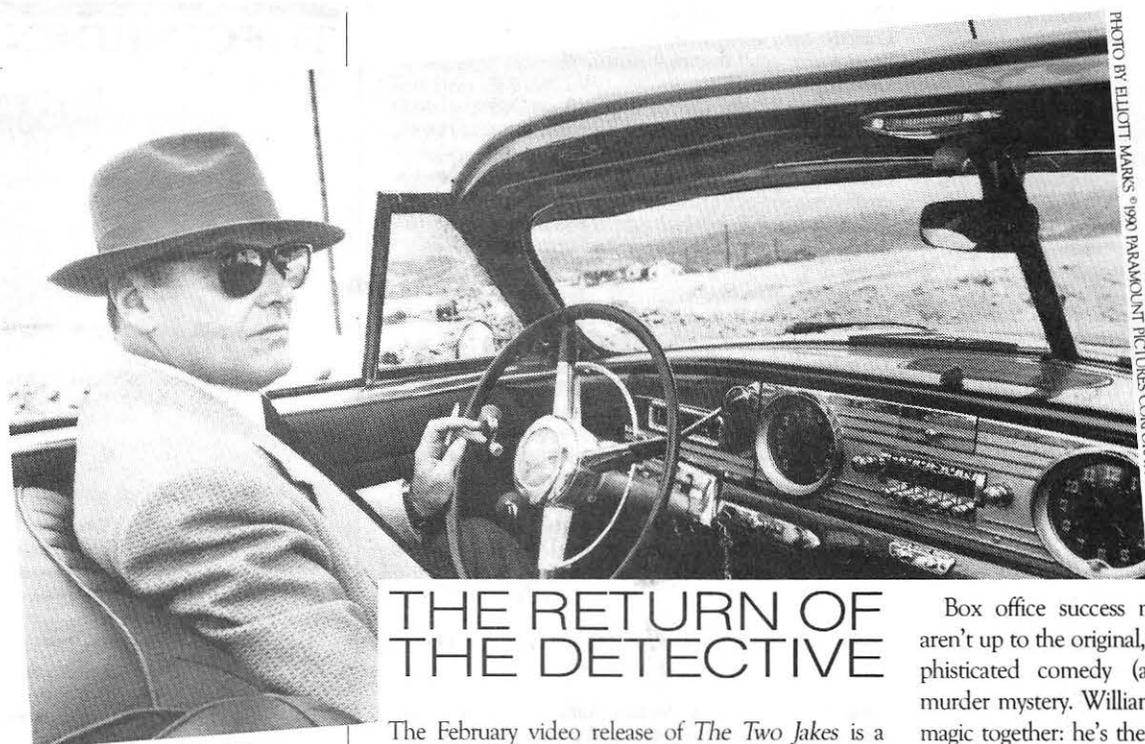


PHOTO BY ELLIOTT MARKS © 1990 PARAMOUNT PICTURES CORPORATION

Jack Nicholson returns as private investigator J.J. Gittes in "The Two Jakes."

## THE RETURN OF THE DETECTIVE

The February video release of *The Two Jakes* is a continuation of one of the finest themes in the cinema. The detective film can only be considered a theme as it has been used in any number of genres (including western and fantasy/horror).

There are traditionally two types of detectives: the police and private investigators. The private detective is by far the *CineGuide* preference. We can more readily relate to and sympathize with a private investigator who, much like a private citizen, is working for himself. The only system in which he works is the same system of morality in which we all live.

The *Maltese Falcon* [John Huston, 1941] is a classic rendition of the private detective film. Taken from the book by Dashiell Hammett, the murder mystery is simple yet intriguing, revolving around a colorful cast of characters, and a history of mythic proportions. In the center is Humphrey Bogart as Sam Spade, looking to get that one, elusive step ahead in a fast-paced case. The strength of the film is its nearly absolute focus on Bogart. Scripted and directed by Huston, only one scene takes place without the character of Spade. This puts us fully in his corner as he tries to get to the truth.

Bogart scored again in *The Big Sleep* [Howard Hawks, 1946], this time as Raymond Chandler's immortal shamus, Philip Marlowe. You may want to keep a scorecard handy for this one—there's a lot of characters and a lot murders. Like Spade in *The Maltese Falcon*, Marlowe is his own man, trying to retain his code of ethics (justice) despite those who surround him.

*The Thin Man* [W.S. Van Dyke, 1934] remains unprecedented to this day. Another film taken from Hammett, it began one of the most successful movie series of all times, and the only *mystery* series to retain its "A" status (from *Boston Blackie* to *Charlie Chan*, all the rest were B-movies).

Box office success notwithstanding, the sequels aren't up to the original, a unique combination of sophisticated comedy (approaching screwball) and murder mystery. William Powell and Myrna Loy are magic together: he's the retired detective looking after his wife's filthy rich inheritance (and Asta the dog), and is practically forced into investigating the disappearance of an old client. The mystery quickly becomes secondary to the Powell-Loy relationship and the multicolored group of suspects. This is the film, by the way, which founded the cliché of inviting all the suspects to a dinner where the murderer is announced.

Thirty years after *The Maltese Falcon* defined detective tradition, *Klute* [Alan J. Pakula, 1971] revised the form by concentrating on a witness instead of the sleuth. Although named for the detective portrayed by Donald Sutherland, the film focuses on an habitual callgirl (Jane Fonda) who may be the only link to a psychotic killer. The film further abandons tradition of the theme by going from the penthouse to the street, so to speak, as the search introduces us to pimps and junkies.

Our final recommendation is *Chinatown* [Roman Polanski, 1974], a superb homage to the detective theme. Robert Towne's Oscar-winning screenplay is a masterful achievement of plot, characters and dialogue, brilliantly delivered by director and cast. The story is set in 1930s Los Angeles: Jack Nicholson is private investigator J.J. Gittes, who winds up in the middle of a murder case by accident (shades of *The Maltese Falcon*). Like Spade, Gittes seems perpetually one step behind, always struggling to live up to his own ideals.

• Editor's note: We should mention that some of these have more than detective stories in common. *The Maltese Falcon* and *Chinatown*, for example, are consummate examples of *film noir*—but that's *another* theme.

**THE END**