



A Century of Cinema: let's explore cinema by the decade – the 1950's. The fifties marked the Golden Age of Television, but it was also great time for Hollywood. The small screen had become big competition and the studios wanted to get people back into theaters - so they upped their game tremendously. It was a decade of big stars and epic productions; a decade of musicals, monsters, mysteries, melodramas - and McCarthyism. Global cinema also came on the scene. Here are hundreds of titles - all available on DVD or through our streaming services (HOOPLA and Kanopy); recommended reading: *The Films of the Fifties: Sunset Boulevard to On the Beach* by Douglas Brode and *An Army of Phantoms: American Movies and the Making of the Cold War* by J. Hoberman.

All About Eve (1950): *Fasten your seatbelts, it's going to be a bumpy night!* Joseph Mankiewicz's Oscar winner stars Anne Baxter as Eve Harrington, a seemingly innocent but secretly ruthless ingénue, who insinuates herself into the life of the aging Broadway star Margo Channing (Bette Davis) and her inner theater circle. A case study of blind ambition and a plot filled with witty, often bitchy dialogue. Other Mankiewicz films of this decade include: *The Barefoot Contessa* (1954), *Guys and Dolls* (1955), *Julius Caesar* (1953), *The Quiet American* (1958) and *Suddenly, Last Summer* (1959).

The Apu Trilogy India's cultural icon Satyajit Ray (1921-1992) created three coming-of-age films which follow the childhood, education and early maturity of a young Bengali named Apu in the early part of the 20th century - *Pather Panchali* (1955, *Song of the Little Road*), *Aparajito* (1956, *The Unvanquished*) and *Apur Sansar* (1959, *The World of Apu*) are delicate masterworks - with original music by legendary composer Ravi Shankar - which brought India into the golden age of international art-house film.

Ashes and Diamonds (Original title: *Popiół i diament*, 1958) Poland's first big international hit - Andrzej Wajda's war epic masterpiece based on the 1948 novel of the same name stars Zbigniew Cybulski; as WWII and the German occupation ends, the Polish resistance and the Russian forces turn on each other in an attempt to take over leadership in Communist Poland. Cybulski's remarkable performance as would-be assassin Maciek Chelmicki would earn him the reputation as "the Polish James Dean." Watch the movie and you'll understand why. Wajda's *Kanal* (1957) is another gem not to be missed.

The Bad and the Beautiful (1952) Vincente Minnelli's melodrama stars Lana Turner, Kirk Douglas, Walter Pidgeon, Dick Powell, Barry Sullivan, Gloria Grahame and Gilbert Roland. Told in flashback form, the film traces the rise and fall of a tough, ambitious Hollywood producer as seen through the eyes of various acquaintances. Douglas plays the hard-driving man who ruthlessly uses everyone on the way to becoming one of Hollywood's top movie makers. Minnelli was known for his Technicolor musicals, but he also directed comedies and dramas including: *The Cobweb* (1955), *Father of the Bride* (1950), *Father's Little Dividend* (1951), *The Long, Long Trailer* (1954), *Lust for Life* (1956) and *Some Came Running* (1958).

Bell Book and Candle (1958) Fantasy romantic comedy based on John Van Druten's 1950 Broadway play of the same name stars Kim Novak and James Stewart, featuring Jack Lemmon, Ernie Kovacs, Hermione Gingold, Elsa Lanchester, and Janice Rule. Gillian Holroyd (Novak), a modern-day witch, casts a spell on her neighbor, Shepherd Henderson (Stewart) to win his love. Other great comedies of this decade include: *Born Yesterday* (1950), *Harvey* (1950), *Pillow Talk* (1959) and *Roman Holiday* (1953).

Ben-Hur (1959) Winner of a record breaking 11 Oscars, William Wyler's religious epic drama adapted from Lew Wallace's 1880 novel *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* stars Charlton Heston as the title character (for which he won the Oscar); other historic epics of this decade include ***The Greatest Show on Earth*** (1952), ***Hercules*** (1958), ***The Robe*** (1953) and ***The Ten Commandments*** (1956).

Black Orpheus (Original title: *Orfeu Negro*, 1959) Marcel Camus's Oscar winning film and international hit; this exotic modern adaptation of the Greek legend portrays its Orpheus (Breno Mello) as a streetcar conductor who meets his Eurydice (Marpessa Dawn) and lives out his legendary destiny during the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro.

The Best of Everything (1959) A bit trashy and melodramatic, the film depicts career women in the late Eisenhower era; stars Joan Crawford as the consummate bitter executive (Amanda Farrow) and Hope Lange as the wide-eyed secretary (Caroline Bender) working in the nasty world of publishing. Other romance/dramas of the decade: ***Executive Suite*** (1954), ***Gidget*** (1959), ***Peyton Place*** (1957), ***A Summer Place*** (1959), ***Tammy and the Bachelor*** (1957) and ***Three Coins in the Fountain*** (1954).

Blackboard Jungle (1955) A shock story of today's high school hoodlums! Based Evan Hunter's 1954 of the same name, it stars Glenn Ford as Richard Dadier, an idealistic teacher who confronts the realities of juvenile delinquency in an interracial inner-city school. The film launched the rock'n'roll era by using Bill Haley's *Rock Around the Clock* as its theme; also featured an unusual breakout role of a black cast member - future Oscar winner and star Sidney Poitier as a rebellious, yet musically talented student. Also don't miss ***Jailhouse Rock*** (1957) starring Elvis Presley and ***The Wild One*** (1953) starring Marlon Brando.

The Bridge on the River Kwai (1957) David Lean's war epic based on Pierre Boulle's 1952 *Le pont de la rivière Kwai* stars William Holden, Alec Guinness and Jack Hawkins British POWs are forced to build a railway bridge across the river Kwai for their Japanese captors in occupied Burma, not knowing that the allied forces are planning a daring commando raid through the jungle to destroy it. Other war classics of this decade include ***The African Queen*** (1951), ***The Desert Fox*** (1951) and ***From Here to Eternity*** (1953).

Cinderella (1950) *Salaga-doola, menchika-boola, Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo. Put them together, and what have you got? Bibbidi-bobbidi-boo.* Walt Disney's animated musical fantasy film based on Charles Perrault's fairy tale of the same name - when Cinderella's cruel stepmother prevents her from attending the Royal Ball, she gets some unexpected help from the lovable mice Gus and Jaq, and from her Fairy Godmother. Other Disney classics of this decade include: ***Alice In Wonderland*** (1951), ***Lady And The Tramp*** (1955), ***Peter Pan*** (1953) and ***Sleeping Beauty*** (1959).

The 400 Blows (Original title: *Les quatre cents coups*, France 1959). François Truffaut's directorial debut stars Jean-Pierre L aud as Antoine Doinel (Truffaut's semi-autobiographical character) - a young boy, left without attention, who delves into a life of petty crime. The title of the film comes from the French idiom *faire les quatre cents coups* ("to raise hell"). The film put the French New Wave Movement on the map, and launched Truffaut's and L aud's film careers. Other French classics of the decade: Robert Bresson's ***Diary of a Country Priest*** (1951) and ***A Man Escaped*** (1951); Henri-Georges Clouzot's thrillers ***Diabolique*** (1955) and ***The Wages of Fear*** (1953), and the rare documentary ***The Mystery of Picasso*** (1956); Jacques Tati's ***Monsieur Hulot's Holiday*** (1953) and ***Mon Oncle*** (1958); Alain Resnais's moody masterpiece ***Hiroshima, Mon Amour*** (1959) and the devastating holocaust documentary ***Night and Fog*** (1956).

Godzilla (*Gojira* 1954) A violent giant monster exhaling radioactivity plunges Japan into the depths of fear! Accept no remakes - Honda Ishirō's original is a real deal: nuclear weapons testing results in the creation of a seemingly unstoppable, dinosaur-like beast. Japan's landmark film was a box office sensation and sparked a deluge of giant monster movies.

Helen Keller in Her Story* or *The Unconquered (1955) simple, honest and tremendously moving – Oscar winning documentary chronicles the life of Helen Keller (1880-1968), who was struck by an illness as a young child that left her both blind and deaf. For years she was cut off from the rest of the world, until Anne Sullivan taught her to read braille, read lips and talk. Heller would go on to be an author, disability rights advocate, political activist and lecturer – a truly remarkable story of courage, faith, perseverance and hope.

High Noon (1952) Fred Zinnemann's western stars Gary Cooper and Grace Kelly; Marshal Will Kane's sense of duty is tested when he must decide to either face a gang of killers alone, or leave town with his new wife, Amy. Though mired in controversy at the time of its release due to its political themes, the film was nominated for seven Academy Awards and won four (Actor, Editing, Score and Song).

Imitation of Life (1959) Douglas Sirk's melodrama stars Lana Turner and Juanita Moore - as Lora Meredith, an aspiring actress, who befriends Annie Johnson, a homeless African American widow, in Coney Island; the two soon share a tiny apartment whilst dealing with their intolerable daughters. Sirk's final Hollywood film dealt with issues of race, class and gender – way ahead of its time. Other Sirk greats include ***All That Heaven Allows*** (1955), ***Magnificent Obsession*** (1954), and ***Written on the Wind*** (1956).

Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956) Science Fiction thriller – based on Jack Finney's 1954 novel *The Body Snatchers* – stars Kevin McCarthy as Dr. Miles J. Bennell, a small-town doctor who learns that the population of his community is being replaced by emotionless alien duplicates. Both McCarthy and Finney always denied the rumor that the story is a statement against McCarthyism and Communism; yet director Don Siegel believed that the political references are inescapable. Other sci-fi greats (and not so greats): ***The Blob*** (1958), ***Creature from the Black Lagoon*** (1954), ***The Day the Earth Stood Still*** (1951), ***Forbidden Planet*** (1956), ***The Incredible Shrinking Man*** (1957), ***Invaders from Mars*** (1953), ***Killers from Space*** (1954), ***On the Beach*** (1959), ***Phantom from Space*** (1953), ***Plan 9 from Outer Space*** (1957), ***Them!*** (1954), ***The Thing from Another World*** (1951). ***The War of the Worlds*** (1953) and ***When Worlds Collide*** (1951).

Little Fugitive (1953) Ray Ashley, Morris Engel and Ruth Orkin wrote and directed what is considered a landmark independent film; with its naturalistic style and groundbreaking use of nonprofessional actors, it tells the story of Joey, a young boy, who runs away to Coney Island after he is tricked into believing he has killed his older brother. Joey collects glass bottles and turns them into money, which he uses to ride the rides. *Little Fugitive* would heavily influence the French New Wave style of the late 1950's and 1960's (see *The 400 Blows* entry).

Marty (1955) Winner of four Oscars (Best Picture, Actor, Director and Screenplay): a heartwarming story of Marty (Ernest Borgnine), a middle-aged butcher, and Clara (Betsy Blair) a school teacher – two lonely souls who have given up on the idea of love – until they meet at a dance and fall for each other.

My Son John (1952) strongly anticommunist film, produced during the height of McCarthyism, it stars Helen Hayes, Van Heflin, Robert Walker and Dean Jagger. The Jeffersons are the ideal picture-perfect all-American family in a small town, but their eldest son John returns home after a long absence spouting views that cause them to worry he may be a Communist. Renowned film critic, J. Hoberman, noted the

film's dual personality – saying it, "aspires to the warmth of a domestic comedy while remaining tendentious to the core, relentlessly unfunny and starkly melodramatic." Dated but worth the watch.

Paths of Glory (1957) *Never has the screen thrust so deeply into the guts of war!* Stanley Kubrick's anti-war film -based on Humphrey Cobb's 1935 novel of the same name - stars Kirk Douglas. Set during World War I, Colonel Dax, the commanding officer of French soldiers, refuses to continue a suicidal attack; afterwards Dax attempts to defend them against charges of cowardice in a court-martial. Its anti-military tone was subject to criticism and censorship in both the US and Europe; Regardless, it was nominated and managed to gain several international awards and accolades thus helping to establish Kubrick's already growing reputation. Other Kubrick films of this decade include ***Fear and Desire*** (1953) and ***The Killing*** (1956).

Rashomon (Japan, 1950): Akira Kurosawa's psychological thriller and masterpiece: the rape of a bride and the murder of her samurai husband are recalled from the perspectives of a bandit, the bride, the samurai's ghost and a woodcutter. The film is celebrated for its plot device, which involves various characters providing subjective, alternative, self-serving, and contradictory versions of the same incident. The title *Rashomon* (meaning main city gate) has become so ingrained in popular culture that the term *rashomon effect* refers to the notorious unreliability of eyewitnesses. Other Kurosawa films of this decade include ***Ikiru*** (1952) and ***Seven Samurai*** (1954).

Rebel Without a Cause (1955) Nicholas Ray's groundbreaking drama about emotionally confused suburban, middle-class teenagers stars James Dean, Sal Mineo and Natalie Wood; the film has achieved landmark status for the acting of cultural icon Dean who died nearly a month before the film's release, in his most celebrated role. Sadly Dean only acted in two other films - Elia Kazan's ***East Of Eden*** (1955), based on John Steinbeck's 1952 novel, and George Stevens' ***Giant*** (1956), based on Edna Ferber's 1952 novel.

The Red Balloon (*Le ballon rouge*, France 1956) Albert Lamorisse's charming cinematic fable stars Lamorisse's own children - his son, Pascal in the main role, and his daughter, Sabine, portrays a young girl. On the streets of 1950's Paris, a young boy, Pascal, is launched on a miraculous adventure when he's playfully pursued by a shiny red balloon that seems to have a mind of its own—until the harsh realities of the world interfere, setting the stage for a deeply moving finale. Shot in beautifully muted Technicolor, this beguiling allegory of innocence and transcendence has inspired generations of viewers to let their imaginations take flight. The film won numerous awards, including the Palme d'Or at Cannes, and to date, the only short film (34 minutes) to win the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay.

The Seventh Seal (Original title: *Det sjunde inseglet*, 1957) Ingmar Bergman's arthouse classic stars Max von Sydow as a disillusioned knight; exhausted after a decade of battling in the Crusades, he encounters Death on a desolate beach and challenges him to a fateful game of chess – a stunning allegory of man's search for meaning. This Swedish import was a sensation in America – it pushed cinema's boundaries and ushered in a new era of movie going. Other Bergman classics of this decade include: ***Sawdust and Tinsel*** (1953), ***Smiles of a Summer Night*** (1957), ***Summer Interlude*** (1951) and ***Wild Strawberries*** (1957).

Singin' in the Rain (1952) Stanley Donen's glorious Technicolor musical stars Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor and Debbie Reynolds; a lighthearted depiction of Hollywood in the late 1920s, with the three stars portraying performers caught up in the transition from silent films to *talkies*; with exquisite musical numbers (choreographed by Kelly) including *Good Morning*, *Make 'Em Laugh* and the iconic *Singin' in the Rain*. Other musicals of this decade include: ***An American in Paris*** (1955), ***The Band Wagon*** (1953), ***Brigadoon*** (1954), ***Carmen Jones*** (1954), ***Damn Yankees*** (1958), ***Funny Face*** (1957), ***Gentlemen***

Prefer Blondes (1953), ***Gigi*** (1958), ***High Society*** (1956), ***The King & I*** (1956) and ***A Star Is Born*** (1954).

La Strada (1954) Italian master Federico Fellini's (1920-1993) Oscar winner stars Giulietta Masina (Fellini's wife) and Anthony Quinn; Gelsomina, a care-free girl, is sold to Zampanò, a traveling entertainer, consequently enduring physical and emotional pain along the way. Other Fellini films of this decade include (another Oscar winner) ***Nights of Cabiria*** (1957) and ***I Vitelloni*** (1953).

A Streetcar Named Desire (1951) ***Stella! Hey, Stella!*** Elia Kazan's powerhouse drama based on Tennessee Williams' Pulitzer Prize-Winning Play stars Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando, Kim Hunter and Karl Malden. Disturbed alcoholic Blanche DuBois (Leigh) moves in with her sister Stella (Hunter) in New Orleans and is tormented by Stanley (Brando), her brutish brother-in-law, while her reality crumbles around her – with intense, memorable performances (Leigh, Hunter and Malden all took home Oscars). Although Brando was nominated – but got beat out by Humphrey Bogart in ***The African Queen*** – he would later pick up his first Oscar in Kazan's ***On the Waterfront*** (1954). Kazan also directed ***A Face in the Crowd*** (1957) and ***Panic in the Streets*** (1950); other Tennessee Williams' plays adapted to the screen include: ***Baby Doll*** (1956), ***Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*** (1958) and ***The Rose Tattoo*** (1955).

Sudden Fear (1952) A rediscovered masterpiece of film noir stars Joan Crawford, Jack Palance and Gloria Grahame. Myra Hudson (Crawford) - a successful playwright - marries Lester Blaine (Palance) a mediocre actor. Myra soon discovers that Lester not only married her for money but that he plans to murder her with the help of his lover Irene Neves (Grahame) – so Myra concocts a scheme of her own! Other great noirs of this decade: ***The Asphalt Jungle*** (1950), ***The Big Heat*** (1953), ***Don't Bother to Knock*** (1952), ***In a Lonely Place*** (1950), ***Kiss Me Deadly*** (1955), ***Niagara*** (1958), ***The Night of the Hunter*** (1955), ***Pickup on South Street*** (1953) and ***Touch of Evil*** (1958).

Sunset Blvd. (1950) ***Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up.*** Austrian-American director, producer and screenwriter Billy Wilder (1906 –2002) was one of the most brilliant, eclectic and versatile artists in Hollywood. My personal favorite is ***Sunset Blvd.*** a black comedy starring William Holden, Gloria Swanson and Erich von Stroheim. Joe Gillis (Holden), a struggling screenwriter (turned gigolo), befriends Norma Desmond (Swanson), a former silent-film star (turned sugar mama); Desmond gradually draws him into her demented fantasy world, where she dreams of making a triumphant return to the silver screen. Other Wilder greats of this decade include ***Ace in the Hole*** (1951), ***Love in the Afternoon*** (1957), ***Sabrina*** (1954) ***The Seven Year Itch*** (1955), ***Some Like It Hot*** (1959), ***Stalag 17*** (1953) and ***Witness for the Prosecution*** (1957).

The Three Faces of Eve (1957) Based on the book about the life of Chris Costner Sizemore, which was written by psychiatrists Corbett H. Thigpen and Hervey M. Cleckley, it stars Joanne Woodward as Eve White, Eve Black and Jane – a woman suffering from Multiple Personality Disorder. The future Mrs. Paul Newman would pick up an Oscar for her performance. Woodward also appeared in: ***A Kiss Before Dying*** (1956), ***The Long, Hot Summer*** (1958) and ***Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys!*** (1958).

The Tingler (1959) ***Ghastly Beyond Belief! Fright-Filled SHOCK Thriller!*** William Castle's campy cult horror film stars Vincent Price as Dr. Warren Chapin, an obsessed pathologist who discovers and captures a parasitic creature that grows when fear grips its host. Castle incorporated the gimmick ***Percepto*** at screenings - whenever blood-curdling screams occurred in the movie, hidden buzzers vibrated certain theater seats, causing audience members to let out their own screams! Other Vincent Price horror classics of this decade include ***The Bat*** (1959), ***The House on Haunted Hill*** (1959) and ***House of Wax*** (1953).

Vertigo (1958) Alfred Hitchcock made a number of masterpieces in the 1950's, yet *Vertigo* is undoubtedly his crowning achievement; part romance, part psychological thriller, it stars James Stewart and Kim Novak. Former police detective John "Scottie" Ferguson is forced to retire because he suffers from vertigo (a false sense of rotational movement). As a private investigator, he is hired to track a mysterious woman in a complex murder plot. Other Hitchcock greats of this decade: ***Dial M for Murder*** (1954), ***The Man Who Knew Too Much*** (1956), ***North by Northwest*** (1959), ***Rear Window*** (1954), ***Strangers on a Train*** (1951), ***To Catch a Thief*** (1955) and ***The Trouble with Harry*** (1955).