



BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

The Apartment

The Apartment may be set during the Christmas holidays but, despite its sophistication and peerless wit, it offers little in the way of festive cheer. This is a romantic comedy macerated in moral corruption and director Billy Wilder's trademark cynicism. Inspired by the British weepie *Brief Encounter* (1945), but transferred to mid-century Manhattan, *The Apartment* is as much about loneliness and self-loathing as it is about love. And yet, the joy of its airtight script by Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond, its bittersweet score by Adolph Deutsch, and Joseph LaShelle's gleaming monochrome widescreen cinematography make it a film to savour – not to mention the famous forced-perspective sets by Alexandre Trauner, which transform an office block into an anonymous dystopia.

Jack Lemmon plays the hapless C.C. Baxter, a desk jockey at a New York insurance firm who is so much of a loser at love that instead of enjoying flirtations of his own he lends his flat to his sleazy colleagues for their adulterous trysts. Shirley MacLaine plays Fran, the unattainable object of his affection, a charming lift operator whose heart is broken by one of those duplicitous office creeps: a callous boss played by Fred MacMurray, returning to the insurance business after his previous turn for Wilder in *Double Indemnity* (1944). Lemmon and MacLaine make an adorable couple, two lost souls in the mean streets, but sharing an ambiguous attraction right up until the film's famous last line.

Pamela Hutchinson, *Sight & Sound*, February 2018

Cameron Crowe on Billy Wilder

The first Billy Wilder movie to ever grace my family's living room was *Some Like It Hot*. I was too small to catch all the subtext of those cross-dressing musicians, but this much was clear: something was going on inside that movie. A subversive sense of humour was at play, and those big laughs rocked our house. Later, someone pointed out that the same man made *Sunset Blvd.*, another movie we all watched together as a family. Both were late-night 'movies of the week' on TV. The magic was palpable, even on that small screen.

I decided to become a filmmaker to protect a script I'd written called *Say Anything...* A number of other directors had passed on it, and the script was about to fall into the hands of someone who cared a lot less about it than me. Wilder, a journalist who became a director for similar reasons, was one of the first masters I turned to in preparing to direct. Most writer-directors seeking inspiration eventually go to Wilder. I worked through his pictures one by one. His work was like a drug – character-rich stories filled with laughs and story turns so deft you could get a body rush sitting in the theatre. Eventually, I got to *The Apartment*, sadly after my father had passed away. Halfway through, it was already my favourite. When I heard the last line of the movie, 'shut up and deal', I realised where one of my dad's favourite phrases had come from.

Part of the great fun of being a fan of Billy Wilder is that your favourite Wilder pictures change over the years. For me, sometimes it's *Love in the Afternoon*;

other times it's *A Foreign Affair*, but usually I return to *The Apartment*. The characters, the score, the melancholy and the perfection of the script and performances... It's hard to top, though the fizzy comic wallop of *Some Like It Hot* sure gives it a run for its money.

In my experience of interviewing him, Wilder usually chose *Some Like It Hot* or *The Apartment* as his personal favourite. His reasons he said, were mostly script-based. He just loved the structure and the successful collaborations with his writing partner Izzy Diamond. He often mentioned the 'cracked mirror' scene in *The Apartment* as one of his favourite moments in any of his films. He explained that these pictures and *Sunset Blvd.* 'just worked'. Of his audience favourites, the only one that seemed to displease him was *Irma la Douce*. As for his favourite actors, he always mentioned Lemmon and Matthau and, with an extra twinkle, Charles Laughton.

Double Indemnity survives because of its masterful victory of tone and performance and direction. For a still young director, it was a work of sly bravura. And Wilder's favourite element – the inner 'love story' between Fred MacMurray and Edward G. Robinson – gives the movie its freshness and a dark kick. Many try for this tone; few get there. Wilder used to say that a masterful comic actor like Cary Grant would forever be beaten at the Oscars by a less talented, furrow-browed serious actor with a 'physical ailment of some kind'. It was his way, I think, of waving the flag for what he felt to be a far more difficult exercise – comedy. He was a great fan of modern pictures that had a certain graceful comic perfection, like the Japanese film *Shall We Dance?* He also loved the deep-tissue satire of *American Beauty*. As for his own legacy, Wilder sometimes scoffed, 'Why would anyone care about me?' But, in fact, he'd noticed the parade of younger filmmakers who cited him and made a point of telling me it genuinely surprised and touched him. 'A lot?' 'A little,' he'd answer with a trademark flick of his eyebrow that indicated the opposite might also be true.

As Wilder once said of Audrey Hepburn, 'there is only one'. But his lessons to other modern directors are clear: protect your script and your characters; observe the values of script structure... Take a look at the work of Wilder's own heroes, from Ernst Lubitsch to William Wyler, and then go out there with a camera and tell your stories with glee and a ferocious lack of false sentimentality. But most of all, 'don't bore them'.

Cameron Crowe, *Sight & Sound*, December 2005

THE APARTMENT

Directed by: Billy Wilder
©/Production Company: Mirisch Company
Produced by: Billy Wilder
Associate Producers: I.A.L. Diamond, Doane Harrison
Production Manager: Allen K. Wood
Assistant Director: Hal Polaire
Script Continuity: May Wale
Written by: Billy Wilder, I.A.L. Diamond
Director of Photography: Joseph LaShelle
Special Effects: Milt Rice
Editor: Daniel Mandell
Art Director: Alexander Trauner
Set Decorator: Edward G. Boyle
Property: Tom Plews
Make-up: Harry Ray
Music by: Adolph Deutsch
Music Editor: Sid Sidney
Sound: Fred Lau
Sound Effects Editor: Del Harris

uncredited

Wardrobe: Forrest T. Butler

Hairstylist: Alice Monte

Cast

Jack Lemmon (*C.C. 'Bud' Baxter*)
Shirley MacLaine (*Fran Kubelik*)
Fred MacMurray (*Jeff D. Sheldrake*)
Ray Walston (*Joe Dobisch*)
Jack Kruschen (*Dr Dreyfuss*)
David Lewis (*Al Kirkeby*)
Hope Holiday (*Margie MacDougall*)
Joan Shawlee (*Sylvia*)
Naomi Stevens (*Mrs Dreyfuss*)
Johnny Seven (*Karl Matuschka*)
Joyce Jameson (*blonde*)
Willard Waterman (*Vanderhof*)
David White (*Eichelberger*)
Edie Adams (*Miss Olsen*)
uncredited
Frances Weintraub Lax (*Mrs Lieberman*)
Benny Burt (*bartender*)
Hal Smith (*Santa Claus*)
Dorothy Abbott (*office worker*)

USA 1960©

125 mins

The screening on Wed 1 Dec features a pre-recorded intro by critic and improviser Tara Judah

BIG SCREEN CLASSICS

The Apartment

Wed 1 Dec 18:00 (+ pre-recorded intro by critic and improviser Tara Judah); Mon 13 Dec 14:30; Wed 22 Dec 20:40; Tue 28 Dec 18:10; Thu 30 Dec 20:30

Remember the Night

Thu 2 Dec 14:30; Mon 27 Dec 13:00; Thu 30 Dec 18:00

Meet Me in St Louis

Fri 3 Dec 20:45; Sun 19 Dec 12:20; Wed 22 Dec 18:00; Tue 28 Dec 12:20

Miracle on 34th Street

Sat 4 Dec 15:50; Sat 11 Dec 18:00; Fri 17 Dec 14:30

A Christmas Tale (Un conte de Noël)

Sun 5 Dec 17:50; Tue 28 Dec 15:15

Scrooge (aka A Christmas Carol)

Mon 6 Dec 18:30; Thu 16 Dec 21:00; Fri 17 Dec 18:20; Sat 18 Dec 18:10; Sun 19 Dec 15:40; Mon 20 Dec 18:10; Tue 21 Dec 14:30

Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas

Tue 7 Dec 18:30; Sat 11 Dec 16:00; Tue 21 Dec 21:00; Thu 23 Dec 20:45

Gremlins

Wed 8 Dec 17:50 (+ intro by Justin Johnson, Lead Programmer); Sat 18 Dec 20:45; Wed 22 Dec 20:45; Wed 29 Dec 20:50

Bad Santa

Fri 10 Dec 20:45; Mon 13 Dec 20:50; Fri 17 Dec 21:00

It's a Wonderful Life

From Sun 12 Dec – Thu 23 Dec

Tokyo Godfathers (Tokyo goddofazazu)

Tue 14 Dec 20:45; Mon 20 Dec 20:45

Carol

Wed 15 Dec 17:50; Mon 27 Dec 18:00; Thu 30 Dec 14:20

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