



SENIORS

Summertime

Summertime (aka Summer Madness)

Directed by: David Lean
©/Production Company: Lopert Films
Production Company: London Film Productions *
Produced by: Ilya Lopert
Associate Producer: Norman Spencer
Production Managers: Raymond Anzarut, Franco Magli
Assistant to Producer: Robert J. Kingsley
Assistant Directors: Adrian Pryce-Jones, Alberto Cardone
Continuity: Margaret Shipway
Screenplay by: H.E. Bates, David Lean
Based on the original play by: Arthur Laurents
Produced on Broadway by: Robert Whitehead, Walter Fried
Photographed entirely in Venice by: Jack Hildyard
Camera Operator: Peter Newbrook
Chief Electrician: Archie Dansie
Editor: Peter Taylor
Production Designed by: Vincent Korda
Assistant Art Directors: Bill Hutchinson, Ferdinand Bellan
Make-up: Cesare Gamberelli
Hairdressing: Grazia De Rossi
Music Composed by: Alessandro Cicognini
Sound Recording: Peter Handford
Sound Re-recording: John Cox
Sound Editors: Winston Ryder, Jacqueline Thiédot
Cast:
Katharine Hepburn (*Jane Hudson*)
Rossano Brazzi (*Renato De Rossi*)
Darren McGavin (*Eddie Yaeger*)
Jane Rose (*Mrs McIlhenny*)
Mari Aldon (*Phyl Yaeger*)
MacDonald Parke (*Mr Lloyd McIlhenny*)
Gaetano Autiero (*Mauro*)
Jeremy Spenser (*Vito De Rossi*)
Isa Miranda (*Signora Fiorini*)
Virginia Simeon (*Giovanna*)
André Morell (*Englishman on train*)*
USA-UK 1955©
100 mins

* Uncredited

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SIGHT AND SOUND

The credits for *Summertime* proudly proclaim that it was photographed entirely in Venice. David Lean's love for the city shines out in every scene. The film was to become his favourite. It was based on a Broadway play, which explored the old Henry James subject of New World innocence meeting and being seduced by Old World charm and experience, but the city is such a central character in the film that it is hard to see how the story worked on stage. Once again, it was Alexander Korda who brought subject and director together.

It was Lean's third film in colour, ravishingly shot by Jack Hildyard, and an Anglo-American co-production. In its theme of an adulterous love affair (the Italian is married), it echoes both *Brief Encounter* (1945) and *The Passionate Friends* (1948). Like *Brief Encounter* it begins with a steam train thundering into the frame. Like *The Passionate Friends* it includes a motorboat ride for the lovers.

Lean is not afraid to show all the tourist sites, and he marshals his crowd scenes with great aplomb. In Katharine Hepburn he had a huge star, and the truthfulness of her playing of an ageing American spinster aching alone in a city of lovers saves the film from being what, suggested critic Dilys Powell, might otherwise have been a novelette within a documentary. Hepburn and Lean became lifelong friends, but were never to make another film together.

Some of the symbolism – there is a shoe motif, and the lovers finally come together to the accompaniment of a firework display over the city – may seem too obvious to modern audiences, and the whole film is shamelessly romantic and glamorous, but, like Venice herself, it is hard to resist.

Janet Moat, BFI Screenonline, screenonline.org.uk

The 'sights' compel attention, landscape is overwhelmingly present, in *Summertime*, which should belong with the small-scale, intimate subjects like *Brief Encounter*, but is David Lean's first film abroad and clearly points the way to the epics. It is quite literally a 'touristy' subject, the story of lonely, middle-aged Jane Hudson (Katharine Hepburn) from Akron, Ohio, who completes a whirlwind tour of Europe with a stay in Venice. She comes perhaps with expectations of the romance that has always eluded her, although her longings seem to have fixed on nothing quite so specific, and she drifts through the city as if in hope of some general transcendence, something unexpected, 'something she'd been missing all her life' (which is said of someone else, and is picked up by frustrated Rosy Ryan when asked what more she could want: 'How can I know? I don't even know what more there is'). Lean's camera drifts with her, and makes up a fair travelogue of Venice until Jane finds something in a brief affair with antique store owner Renato De Rossi (Rossano Brazzi). But far from lush, *Summertime* is as ascetic a love story as T. E. Lawrence could wish. Renunciation is the key. Jane's confused reasons for ending the affair – 'Because we have to, because it's wrong, and because you and I would only end in nothing' – suggest she is choosing nothing instead. Which is echoed by Prince Feisal (Alec Guinness) challenging Lawrence about his love of the desert: 'There is nothing in the desert, and no one needs nothing.'

Summertime is a love story in which it could be said – as it has of *Brief Encounter* – that 'nothing happens'. But what is extraordinary here is the degree to which Lean enshrines that nothingness: the greater part of the film is

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taken up with Jane's perambulations, her undirected looking (abetted by a cine camera), her glancing relationships with a street urchin ('Are you looking for something, lady?') and other (paired) tourists at her hotel. Even during the brief flowering of her affair with Renato – after a misunderstanding about the state of his marriage has been sorted out – as they sit holding hands at an outdoor cafe in the Piazza San Marco, her eye returns to (and Lean's subjectively wandering camera insists on) the sights. When challenged, she confesses she was 'back in Akron', and subsequent dialogue on the point – 'You are far away'; 'I am very close' – points to the kind of 'reality' problem broached in *River Kwai*. Further loss – making Jane a three-time loser – is signified by a trio of gardenias: one which she recalls not getting at a ball in her youth, one which falls in the canal during a stroll with Renato, and one which he fails to get to her on time as she leaves Venice on the train. The only bleaker end to an affair is the last shot of Lara (Julie Christie) in *Doctor Zhivago*, prim, besuited, a tiny figure walking away beside a huge grey wall while Zhivago's brother Yevgraf (Alec Guinness) recalls her probable disappearance into a labour camp. Like that shot, the bleak-as-a-desert perspectives of summer in Venice suggest that, five years before *L'avventura*, *Summertime* had Antonioni in its heart.

Richard Combs, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, April 1985

'Summertime': a contemporary review

The theme here is a traditional one: New World puritanism confronts European opportunism; the innocent American surrenders to the charm and experience of the Old World, and at the same time retreats from its implications of corruption. It is a subject that has fascinated American writers since Henry James, and apparently Arthur Laurents' play conveyed something of this sense of cultures and temperaments in opposition that the film, through a conventional romanticisation of the encounter, has sacrificed. The script maintains, in fact, slightly the tone of an impeccably smooth and glossy novelette, romantic rather than sentimental, but scarcely concerned to explore its situation very deeply. It falls off into caricature in presenting the American tourist couple; intriguingly sketches in the character of the manageress of the *pensione*, and then virtually drops her; and seems scarcely to provide adequate motivation for Jane's final decision.

These limitations in approach are not, as it happens, of major importance: what primarily counts here is the beauty of the city and the fascination of Hepburn's performance. The splendours of Venice are wonderfully captured, the colour photography is rich and sensitive, and in contriving to present the city always through Jane's eyes (she is an enthusiastic amateur photographer) the director has strikingly conveyed the sense of a place as it may appear, bewildering as well as beautiful, to the stranger and the tourist.

Katharine Hepburn's performance is finely perceptive and intelligent. Never less than fascinating, the actress is particularly successful in the early scenes, where the quality of nervous tension in her playing brilliantly suggests the excitements, the moments of unexpected boredom and unhappiness, the romantic regrets and longings that assail this lonely tourist. Rossano Brazzi has one good speech, in which he forces Jane to recognise the strength of her own emotions, but otherwise plays a conventional romantic part with somewhat cold assurance. Other players have few opportunities, although Gaetano Auterio is quite engaging as the little street urchin.

Monthly Film Bulletin, November 1955