

Universal Pictures: Restorations and Rediscoveries, 1928–1937

Screening Schedule

May 13–June 15, 2016

The Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters

King of Jazz. 1930. USA. Directed by John Murray Anderson. In his push to establish Universal as a first-rank studio, Junior Laemmle put two super-productions on the schedule at once: the Oscar-winning *All Quiet on the Western Front* and this spectacular musical revue built around the popular band leader Paul Whiteman. We're proud to present the world premiere of Universal's brand-new digital restoration of *King of Jazz*, now restored to its full length, with its two-color Technicolor burnished to its original glory. "Rhapsody in Blue," which Whiteman commissioned from George Gershwin, provides a lavish centerpiece—and a problem for "color supervisor" Natalie Kalmus, since blue was one hue early Technicolor could not reproduce. 98 min. **FRI, MAY 13, 7:00 T1; SAT, MAY 14, 2:00 T1; TUE, JUN 14, 7:00 T3**

Law and Order. 1932. USA. Directed by Edward L. Cahn. Adapting a novel by W. R. Burnett (*Little Caesar*), director Cahn delivers a stylistically innovative, early anti-Western shot through with the violence and cynicism of the gangster era. Walter Huston (whose son, John, contributed to the screenplay) plays a Wyatt Earp-like figure pressed into cleaning up the town of Tombstone—clearly a hopeless task. Harry Carey, star of many early Universal Westerns, lends support. 57 min. **SAT, MAY 14, 4:30 T2; SAT, MAY 21, 5:00 T1**

Broadway. 1929. USA. Directed by Paul Fejos. The great Hungarian stylist Paul Fejos (*Lonesome*) received a million-dollar budget for this adaptation of George Abbott's stage success, a backstage musical with a gangster twist. Glenn Tryon is the hapless hoofer trying to pry his girl from the clutches of a bootlegger, though the real star is the gigantic nightclub set, a Cubist hallucination that Fejos explores through the vertiginous camera movements made possible by the world's largest camera crane. This new restoration from Universal features the long-lost Technicolor finale. 104 min. **SAT, MAY 14, 7:00 T2; WED, JUN 15, 7:00 T1**

Air Mail. 1932. USA. Directed by John Ford. Working on a loan-out from Fox, John Ford directed this aviation drama from a script cowritten by Lt. Comdr. Frank Wead, whom Ford would later eulogize in *The Wings of Eagles* (1957). Ralph Bellamy is the duty-bound chief pilot in a Rocky Mountain air base, fed up with the hijinks of his irresponsible second (Pat O'Brien) but forced to rely on his skill. 84 min. **SUN, MAY 15, 2:30; TUE, MAY 24, 7:00 T1**

Little Man, What Now? 1934. USA. Directed by Frank Borzage. Another visitor from Fox, Frank Borzage (*7th Heaven*), was recruited to direct Hans Fallada's best-selling novel about the struggles of a young couple (Margaret Sullavan and Douglass Montgomery) in Weimar Germany. Borzage and Sullavan became an enduring team when both moved to MGM, where the gloom and grittiness of *Little Man*—arguably the first anti-Nazi Hollywood film—would have been unthinkable. 98 min. **SUN, MAY 15, 5:00; TUE, MAY 24, 4:00 T1**

A House Divided. 1931. USA. Directed by William Wyler. A distant Laemmle relative, William Wyler left Europe to join Universal as a messenger in 1923, and rose to become one of the studio's leading directors. This rare 1931 film reflects Wyler's growing ambitions and skill, blending Ibsen and Freud for a starkly Oedipal tale of a stern fisherman (Walter Huston) and his soft son (Kent Douglass, later billed as Douglass Montgomery) who come into violent conflict over the father's mail-order bride (Helen Chandler). 70 min. **MON, MAY 16, 4:00; THU, MAY 26, 4:00; SAT, JUN 4, 7:30 T1**

East of Borneo. 1931. USA. Directed by Melford. Best known as the film Joseph Cornell sampled to create his 1936 collage *Rose Hobart*, this exotic adventure is a wild ride in its own right. Director George Melford, who famously explored the erotic attractions of a sadistically inclined

Other with the outlandish figure of Rudolph Valentino in *The Sheik*, returns to his favorite theme. The delicate Hobart plays an American woman who penetrates the jungles of Malaysia in search of her alcoholic husband (Charles Bickford), a once-respected physician now in the thrall of a cruel (but Sorbonne-educated) island prince (Georges Renavent). 77 min.

MON, MAY 16, 7:00; SUN, MAY 22, 2:30; THU, JUN 2, 4:00 T1

Seed. 1931. USA. Directed by John M. Stahl. John M. Stahl, already a veteran director by 1931 (and with *Leave Her to Heaven* 14 years in his future), joined Universal when his own independent company went bankrupt. *Seed* became the first in an informal trilogy of mature, morally ambivalent films about adultery (along with *Back Street* and *Only Yesterday*, also in our program). John Boles, an ambitious young writer, is frustrated in his career by his need to support his wife (Lois Wilson) and five children. But an old flame (Genevieve Tobin), now a literary agent, reappears with a plan in mind. 96 min.

TUE, MAY 17, 4:00 T2; THU, MAY 26, 7:00 T1

Back Street. 1932. USA. Directed by John M. Stahl. The first of three Universal adaptations of Fanny Hurst's bestselling novel, and by far the best, John Stahl's expert melodrama stars Irene Dunne as a woman who allows herself to be "kept" by a financier (John Boles). Their affair continues over a period of 30 years, despite her efforts to find a life of her own, until she is finally confronted by her lover's adult son. Production Code enforcer Joseph Breen denied approval for a 1938 reissue, claiming that the film "has become a symbol of the wrong kind of picture." 93 min.

WED, MAY 18, 4:00 T2; MON, MAY 30, 7:00 T1

Okay, America. 1932. USA. Directed by Tay Garnett. One of several films from the early 1930s based on the Broadway columnist Walter Winchell, Tay Garnett's film offers Universal's *All Quiet on the Western Front* star Lew Ayres as Larry Wayne, gossip-in-chief of the *New York Blade*. Perceived as a more powerful figure than the President of the United States (Larry is called to Washington to help when the President's daughter is kidnapped), he blithely takes on gangster Edward Arnold as his secretary (Maureen O'Sullivan) looks on lovingly. But this isn't one of those sentimental Warner Bros. gangster films—it's another of Universal's supremely cynical visions of American urban life, as Larry discovers in the final scene. 78 min. **FRI, MAY 20, 4:00; SUN, JUN 5, 2:30 T1**

By Candlelight. 1933. USA. Directed by James Whale. Written by Hans Kraly, Karen De Wolf, F. Hugh Herbert, Ruth Cummings. With Elissa Landi, Paul Lukas, Nils Asther, Esther Ralston. Paul Lukas—Universal's somewhat lugubrious answer to the continental seducers played at Paramount by Adolphe Menjou—assumed the lead in a series of sophisticated comedies at the studio, none better than this polished James Whale production. As the butler to an aristocratic cad (Nils Asther), he learns successfully to imitate his master's technique with the ladies. But is he up to the challenge of Marie (Elissa Landi), the mysterious young woman he meets on the train to Monte Carlo? 69 min. **FRI, MAY 20, 7:00; SUN, JUN 5, 5:00 T1**

Afraid to Talk. 1932. USA. Directed by Edward L. Cahn. As the sole witness to a gangland execution, bellboy Eric Linden dutifully reports what he knows to district attorney Louis Calhern—who, being on the underworld's payroll himself, seizes the opportunity to frame the young idealist for the crime. Perhaps the most violent and pessimistic of all the early-1930s gangster films, it's directed with great visual flair by the underappreciated Edward L. Cahn. 69 min. **SAT, MAY 21, 2:00; FRI, MAY 27, 7:00 T1**

Laughter in Hell. 1933. USA. Directed by Edward L. Cahn. This radical work, adapted from a contemporary novel by Jim Tully, effectively ended Edward L. Cahn's career as a major studio director, though he continued to work at a furious pace on B-pictures and shorts. Relentlessly bleak, the film describes the downward spiral of a decent man (train engineer Pat O'Brien), whose impulsive killing of his wife and her lover (depicted with slam zooms 40 years ahead of their time) leads to his descent through several distinctively American circles of hell. 70 min. **SAT, MAY 21, 7:30; FRI, MAY 27, 4:30 T1**

East Is West. 1930. USA. Directed by Monta Bell. Unheralded auteur Monta Bell (*Downstairs*) wrote and directed this stylish sound remake of a dubious 1922 Constance Talmadge yellow-peril melodrama, now with Mexican star Lupe Velez cast as an Asian woman trapped in San Francisco's Chinatown, where she suffers the unwelcome attentions of triad boss Edward G. Robinson (still a year away from his breakthrough in *Little Caesar*). 75 min. **SUN, MAY 22, 5:00; MON, JUN 6, 4:00 T1**

The Good Fairy. 1935. USA. Directed by William Wyler. A Broadway hit for Helen Hayes, lavishly reconfigured by Laemmle as a showcase for Universal's biggest non-horror asset, Margaret Sullavan. William Wyler (who married Sullavan during the production) directs Preston Sturges's adaptation of Ferenc Molnár's play about a young Budapest woman who invents a husband to protect herself from a wolfish industrialist (Frank Morgan), only to find that a struggling lawyer with the same name exists (in the form of Herbert Marshall). 98 min. **MON, MAY 23, 7:00; SAT, JUN 4, 5:00 T1**

Her First Mate. 1933. USA. Directed by William Wyler. First paired in *The Unexpected Father* (1932), the comedians ZaSu Pitts and Slim Summerville appeared as a mismatched couple in seven features for Universal, including this engaging 1933 vehicle directed by an up-and-coming William Wyler. Old sea dog Slim sells candy on a night ferry while wife ZaSu believes he's the ship's first mate; complications ensue when she uses the family nest egg to buy Slim a ferry of his own. 66 min. **WED, MAY 25, 4:00; SAT, JUN 4, 2:00 T1**

Love Birds. 1934. USA. Directed by William A. Seiter. Laemmle brought in comedy specialist William A. Seiter (*Sons of the Desert*) to direct the studio's sixth ZaSu Pitts–Slim Summerville comedy, which finds the couple meeting when both are sold deeds to an abandoned ranch in the California desert. Their lonely lives become much more crowded when a drifter discovers gold on the property—though all he's found is Slim's missing filling. 61 min. **WED, MAY 25, 7:00; WED, JUN 8, 7:00 T1**

Show Boat. 1936. USA. Directed by James Whale. Universal first adapted the groundbreaking Edna Ferber/Jerome Kern/Oscar Hammerstein musical as a hastily assembled part-talkie in 1929; the 1936 version would be both Junior Laemmle's most ambitious production and the beginning of his downfall, as cost overruns forced the studio into taking on increased debt. The studio's top director, James Whale, brought in as many members of the original Broadway cast as possible, including Helen Morgan, Charles Winninger, and Sammy White; Irene Dunne had played Magnolia in a traveling company and Paul Robeson, who had played Joe in the London company, returned for his signature piece, "Ol' Man River." 113 min. **SAT, MAY 28, 2:00; FRI, JUN 3, 7:00 T1**

The Kiss Before the Mirror. 1933. USA. Directed by James Whale. Based on a Viennese play (by Ladislaus Fodor), photographed by a German (Karl Freund), and directed by an Englishman (James Whale), *The Kiss Before the Mirror* represents Junior Laemmle's Universal at its most cosmopolitan. A celebrated lawyer (Paul Lukas) defends his closest friend (Frank Morgan), who has been charged with the murder of his unfaithful wife (Gloria Stuart). The experience leads him to question his own wife (Nancy Carroll), who indeed is having an affair. 67 min. **SAT, MAY 28, 5:00 T1**

Remember Last Night? 1935. USA. Directed by James Whale. The success of *Bride of Frankenstein* enabled James Whale to make one of his strangest, most personal films—a screwball comedy that self-destructs. A huge, lavish art deco set represents the Long Island home of wealthy, wisecracking newlyweds Robert Young and Constance Cummings, typical screwball protagonists in that they are also alcoholic, infantile snobs who, along with the rest of their friends, were too drunk to remember what happened at a party where a murder was committed. 81 min. **SAT, MAY 28, 7:30; SAT, JUN 11, 2:00 T1**

The Cohens and Kellys in Hollywood. 1932. USA. Directed by Dillon. The sixth entry in Universal's long-running series of ethnic comedies, about a Jewish family (headed by George Sidney) and an Irish family (headed by Charles Murray) whose offspring have a habit of falling in

love with each other. This one throws in a satire of the movie business, as young Kitty Kelly (June Clyde) becomes a star at Continental Productions, and young Melville Cohen (Norman Foster) writes songs for musicals. Crisis arrives when audiences grow tired of all singing, all dancing—an experience Junior Laemmle knew firsthand. Many Universal stars make cameo appearances, including Boris Karloff and Tom Mix. 75 min. **SUN, MAY 29, 2:30; TUE, JUN 7, 7:00 T1**

Once in a Lifetime. 1932. USA. Directed by Mack. The Laemmles thought it prudent to append a signed apology to the studio's adaptation of Kaufman and Hart's Broadway hit, a brutal satire on the movie business. Jack Oakie, Aline MacMahon, and Russell Hopton, three vaudevillians who see opportunity in silent stars threatened by the talkies, open a "voice culture" school under the sponsorship of a broadly caricatured mogul (Gregory Ratoff). 91 min. **SUN, MAY 29, 5:00; TUE, JUN 7, 4:00 T1**

Only Yesterday. 1933. USA. Directed by Stahl. Director John Stahl brought his Broadway discovery, Margaret Sullavan, to Universal to star in her first film—a powerful adaptation of Stefan Zweig's *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, which was famously remade by Max Ophuls at Universal 15 years later. 105 min. **MON, MAY 30, 4:00; SUN, JUN 12, 2:30 T1**

Parole! 1936. USA. Directed by Landers. B movies were always a part of Universal's business plan, but under Junior Laemmle even the bread-and-butter productions reflected increased ambition. An early effort by the deft and insanely prolific Lew Landers (still working under his real name, Louis Friedlander), *Parole!* is a crime thriller, co-written by Horace McCoy, that finds time in its 65 minutes to editorialize on behalf of ex-convicts while providing plenty of violent action. 67 min. **TUE, MAY 31, 4:00; MON, JUN 6, 7:00 T1**

Up for Murder. 1931. USA. Directed by Bell. A naïve young newspaperman (Lew Ayres) becomes involved with an older woman (Genevieve Tobin) without realizing that she is the mistress of his publisher (Purnell Pratt). Monta Bell directed this remake of his own, apparently autobiographical silent film *Man, Woman and Sin*, now set in that world of gaudy, urban corruption that was a Junior Laemmle fixation. 68 min. **TUE, MAY 31, 7:00 T1**

Destry Rides Again. 1932. USA. Directed by Stoloff. The legendary cowboy star Tom Mix was nearing the end of his career when he made his belated feature talkie debut in Ben Stoloff's adaptation of Max Brand's novel, which stands here as representation for the hundreds of Westerns that kept Universal afloat throughout the history of the studio. The title, but not much else, was later borrowed for the famous 1939 comic western starring James Stewart and Marlene Dietrich. 61 min. **THU, JUN 2, 7:00; WED, JUN 8, 4:00 T1**

There's Always Tomorrow (aka Too Late for Love). 1934. USA. Directed by Sloman. The legendary cowboy star Tom Mix was nearing the end of his career when he made his belated feature talkie debut in Ben Stoloff's adaptation of Max Brand's novel, which stands here as representation for the hundreds of Westerns that kept Universal afloat throughout the history of the studio. The title, but not much else, was later borrowed for the famous 1939 comic western starring James Stewart and Marlene Dietrich. 86 min. **FRI, JUN 3, 4:00; SUN, JUN 12, 5:00 T1**

The Road Back. 1937. USA. Directed by James Whale. What began as a sequel to Universal's antiwar *All Quiet on the Western Front*, under the direction of James Whale, was finally released as what has been described as "a Slim Summerville comedy" after the Laemmles were deposed and Nazi diplomat Georg Gyssling threatened a boycott unless "anti-German" scenes were removed. Whale's original cut has now been restored by The Library of Congress and is presented here in its U.S. premiere (200 min). For the sake of comparison we will also be screening the cut version (70 min). **SHORT VERSION: FRI, JUN 10, 4:00 T1. LONG VERSION: FRI, JUN 10, 7:00; SAT, JUN 11, 7:00 T1**

The Last Warning. 1929. USA. Directed by Leni. German director Paul Leni did much to establish the style of Universal's horror films with *The Cat and the Canary* (1927) and *The Man Who Laughs* (1928). The 1929 *Last Warning*, a murder mystery set backstage at a Broadway theater, is equally stylish, but sadly proved to be Leni's last film; he died of blood poisoning a few months after its release. This major digital restoration comes from Universal's new preservation division. 89 min. **SAT, JUN 11, 4:30; WED, JUN 15, 4:00 T1**