

# Lights, Camera, Action!

## New Marlowe is happy return to 40s

By DAN MERKUR  
Excalibur Staff

In the hard-boiled detective vein, there were just two creators, Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. Hammett created the archetype, Sam Spade, while Chandler produced the assembly line.

James Garner is the fourth actor to play Philip Marlowe (Bogart in *The Big Sleep* (1946), Robert Montgomery in *Lady in the Lake* (1946), and Dick Powell in *Murder My Sweet* (1944), but his style owes more to Chandler's other screen creations — characters like the MacMurray role in *Double Indemnity*, and the two leads in Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train*. In other words, it's not Bogey, but it's a very enjoyable substitute.

The essential difference between Spade and Marlowe (in fact between Hammett and Chandler) is that the former was a lot brighter. Spade is a witty though cynical private dick, but he leaves unsaid far more than he states.

Marlow, on the other hand, is dumber, cruder, wise-cracking but not nearly as piercing. Bogart played Spade, but when he went to play Marlowe, he only played Spade all over again. James Garner is Philip Marlowe.

Philip Marlowe is the last knight errant, the last cavalier, the last of Don Quixote's progeny. He was a strange figure in the 40s for the post-war realist-pessimists, and he is stranger yet today — but he is no less appropriate, no less real, and no less touching.

In one brief moment inside a TV studio control room, an executive points out a screen to Marlowe on which a show, starring the Gayle Hunnicutt character, is being taped. He asks for comment. Marlowe says she was beautiful. And only then do we realize he has been watching the monitor that was playing Greta Garbo in a scene



James Garner, the fourth actor to play private eye Philip Marlowe.

from *Grand Hotel*. The sequence is one that must have been added to the original story by the scriptwriters (Chandler wrote *The Little Sister* in the 40's), who are to be commended for capturing all of Chandler's intentions, without capturing his crudity

(the clichés, as in *Double Indemnity*, "Honey-suckle never smelled like murder before.")

Paul Bogart, the director, has done a lot of TV work, and has gained himself some considerable reputation in that area. He

handles the camera well — to avoid boredom from immobility and gimmickry, and to further his other purposes. For instance, rather than zoom in on a license plate to read it, he has the car back out of the parking spot into the foreground of the frame — more or less a zoom in reverse, that effectively services both the plot and his artistry.

Also to Bogart's credit is the good sense not to exploit the bloodshed inherent in a multiple murder mystery. Not that gore is necessarily in bad taste — just that at this moment in screen history, gore has been overdone enough to negate its value as gore.

Perhaps his TV training, with TV's more stringent censorship codes taught Bogart how to be subtle. In an era of bluntness, when any sort of suggestion let alone symbolism is unthinkable, when the audience's ability to supplement the image on the screen is considered negligible, Bogart's style is like a sudden return to the narrative style of the forties — a very happy return to the forties.

The film is literate, the pacing is swift but not too fast, Garner is perfect, the supporting cast is highly competent, the direction is inventive, and the camera-work is good.

I think Marlowe is a good film — not a great one mind you, but one that is guaranteed to occupy you comfortably for two hours. What more do you want?

*Marlowe* (MGM, 1969) Directed by Paul Bogart. Produced by Gabriel Katzka and Sidney Beckerman. Based on Raymond Chandler's novel, *The Little Sister*. Screenplay by Stirling Silliphant. With James Garner, Gayle Hunnicutt, Rita Moreno, Carroll O'Connor, Sharon Farrell, William Daniels, Jackie Coogan and Bruce Lee.

### Choice week for revivals

## Three of best ever comedies showing this week

By LLOYD CHESLEY  
Excalibur Staff

This is a choice week for revivals, if you like your movies fresh, exciting, consistent, entertaining, or any of the eight million other complimentary adjectives that critics have run to death over the years.

It's hard to see a good comedy these days, but this week you can see three of the absolute best ones ever done. Why? Because they're the three best films of the Marx Brothers.

According to Groucho, the Marx Brothers were some of the first brothers around, after the Smith Brothers; the Brothers Karamzov; Dan Brothers, an outfielder with Detroit; and "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" (This was originally "Brothers, Can You Spare a Dime?" but this was spreading a dime pretty thin, so they threw out one brother, gave all the money to the other one and whittled it down to "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?")

Certainly, the Marx Brothers were the funniest. Their humour is so insane that people have rarely tried to imitate it, and those that have failed miserably.

The Marxes had their best time in their stay at Paramount in the early 30's when they could take their shows on the road to test out the laughs with a live audience, and when they weren't hampered by censors (too much) and when they had writers like the immortal George S. Kaufman to do their scripts, even though the Marxes were free with their material, changing it constantly.

At one of their on-stage try-outs, Kaufman was heard to cry out in feeble satisfaction (somewhere in the second act): "Hey, that's my line!"



Gary Cooper in *Beau Geste*.

Unless (until?) they run into trouble with the courts, *The Silent Cinema* will be showing *Duck Soup* and *Horse Feathers* for the next couple weeks. Marxian masterpieces, these have seen numerous runs on TV and are bound to be with us for a long time. Still, if you haven't seen them or if you want the added pleasure of watching with a crowd, these are the second and third best comedies ever made.

Meanwhile, tonight only at the Ontario Film Theatre, you can see the best comedy ever made. It's the Marx Brothers in *Animal Crackers* (see companion article), along with their favourite grand dame, Margaret Dumont. Kaufman strikes again. I saw this film as a special screening a couple of years ago. There was a reel-change half way through the show, and we needed it: our faces literally hurt from the constant laughter. Scalp those Arlo tickets and go and have the best time that entertainment can offer.

If you like your entertainment more serious, Cinematheque, at the Toronto Music Library, 559 Avenue Road at St. Clair Avenue, on Friday at 7:15 and 9:30, will be showing one of the all-time great adventure films, the 1939 version of *Beau Geste*.

Gary Cooper stars in this classic of the foreign legion, a tale of, what else? daring, honour and action.

Pauline Kael says that Cooper went sappy in his later films, and that if kids judged him by his early roles, he would be as big as Bogart. His performance as the gallant Beau more than proves this, for he tops even his conception of Wild Bill Hickok in that greatest of all Westerns, *The Plainsman*.

William Wellman is one of the stranger cases of Hollywood directors, a man with a quiet reputation who, when considered, always made the best of what he set out to do: *The Public Enemy* (a top gangster classic); *Wings* (a leading air-war film); and *Beau Geste*.

All adventure films at once, *Beau Geste* is also vanishing

from our lives as the television rights were nullified some five years ago. This would be another last chance to see another great film.

*Horse Feathers* (Paramount 1932) Directed by Norman McLeod. Screenplay by Harry Ruby, Bert Kalmar, S.J. Perelman and Will B. Johnstone. Photography by Ray June. Music and Lyrics by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby. With Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Zeppo Marx, Thelma Todd, David Landau, James Pierce and Nat Pendleton.

*Duck Soup* (Paramount, 1933) Directed by Leo McCarey. Screenplay by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby. Photography by Henry Sharp. Art Direction by Hans Dreier and Wiard B. Ihnen. Music and Lyrics by Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby. With Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Zeppo Marx, Margaret Dumont, Louis Calhern and Edgar Kennedy.

*Beau Geste* (Paramount, 1939) Directed by William Wellman. Based on the novel by P.C. Wren. Art Direction by Hans Dreier. Music by Alfred Newman. Costumes by Edith Head. With Gary Cooper, Robert Preston, Ray Milland, Brian Donlevy, Susan Hayward, J. Carrol Naish and Donald O'Connor (as Beau as a child).

### Animal crackers on

Tonight, at one show only, at 8:30, the Ontario Film Theatre is showing *Animal Crackers*, the Marx Brothers' second film, and for my money, their best. In it, Groucho plays the immortal Captain Spalding, the African explorer (did someone call him schnorer?) and dictates the famous letter to Messrs. Hungerdunger, Hungerdunger, Hungerdunger, Hungerdunger and McCormick to his secretary Jamison (Zeppo). Margaret Dumont comes out with some of her best work, something about a trunk Groucho owns. Chico spends his time wondering "why a duck?" Harpo; well, Harpo chases blondes.

*Animal Crackers* is a film that for various legal complications has played Toronto just once since its release in 1930. Tonight makes the second time, and maybe the last.

*Animal Crackers* (Paramount, 1930) Directed by Victor Heerman. Written by George S. Kaufman, Morrie Ryskind and S.J. Perelman. With Groucho, Chico, Harpo and Zeppo Marx, and Margaret Dumont. At the OFT, in the Ontario Science Centre, Eglinton Avenue at Don Mills Road, tonight only, at 8:30.

### Clap/bored

First Run	Direction	Script	Photo	Music
<i>Alice's Restaurant</i> (Nortown)	***	**	**	***
<i>Easy Rider</i> (New Yorker)	***	**	***	***
<i>Midnight Cowboy</i> (Hyland)	***	***	***	***
<i>A Married Couple</i> (Cinecity)	***	***	***	***
<i>Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid</i>	***	***	***	***
<i>Oh! What a Lovely War</i> (Hollywood)	***	***	***	***
<i>The Battle of Britain</i> (Carlton)	**	**	***	**
<i>Marlowe</i> (Imperial & Yorkdale)	**	***	***	**
<i>Take the Money and Run</i> (Cinema)	*	*	**	**
<i>Paint Your Wagon</i> (University)	*	*	**	**
<b>Revivals</b>				
<i>Horse Feathers and Duck Soup</i>	***	***	***	***
<i>(The Silent Cinema)</i>				
<i>Beau Geste</i> (Cinematheque)	***	***	**	***

\*\*\* Clap \*\* Ambivalent \* Bored