



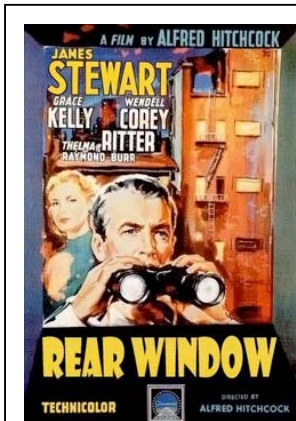
Presents

GlenVIEWINGS: Movies With A Motive

Rear Window

“Tell me everything you saw... and what it means.” Lisa

Rear Window offers perhaps the best example of what defines a ‘Hitchcock film.’ The Master of Suspense engaged audiences by aligning the viewer’s gaze with that of the central characters. *Rear Window* takes this motif to its extreme, as we watch a man watching others.



Director:

Alfred Hitchcock

Producer:

Alfred Hitchcock

Writers:

John Michael Hayes
Cornell Woolrich
(story)

Starring:

James Stewart
Grace Kelly
Wendell Corey
Thelma Ritter
Raymond Burr

Music:

Franz Waxman

Cinematography:

Robert Burks, ASC

Editor:

George Tomasini

Distributor:

Paramount Pictures

Release date:

1 August 1954

Running time:

112 minutes

Budget

US\$1 million

Box Office gross

\$36,764,313 (US)

In an allegory of the process of filmmaking, the far side of the courtyard constitutes a screen on which the hero projects his fantasies. The individual events – like the individual shots in a film – only gain meaning through being assembled in a montage that is constructed solely through his point of view.

The experiences and perceptions of L.B. Jeffries (James Stewart) mirror our own, as we watch the drama unfold. As Jeffries tries to unravel the mystery, we too are piecing together the plot from the clues we are given. Suspense emanates from not knowing if we can believe our eyes; a moral conundrum stems from whether we should be looking in the first place.

By the close, the wheelchair-bound Jeffries is left shouting that old movie cliché “Don’t go in there!” as he helplessly watches the events his curiosity has set in motion. He is advised not to look if he’s too “squeamish,” and we too can look away if the suspense becomes too much. But we don’t; by this point we cannot help ourselves, any more than he can.

DID YOU KNOW?

- All of the sound in the film is diegetic, meaning that the music, speech and sounds originate from within the world of the film.
- The entire film was shot on one set, which was at that time the largest ever built by Paramount studios. All the apartments in Thorwald’s building had electricity and running water.
- During the month-long shoot “Miss Torso”, lived in her apartment all day, relaxing between takes as if really at home.
- The film was based on the short story “It Had to be Murder” by Cornell Woolrich, a recluse who spent most of his life sharing a Harlem apartment with his mother.
- It is possible that Woolrich never saw the film; he was not invited to the film’s premiere and it did not air on television during his lifetime.
- Hitchcock makes a cameo appearance in each of his films. Keep an eye out for him.
- The film was nominated for four Oscars, but did not win any. Hitchcock himself was nominated a total of six times in his career, including Best Director for *Rear Window*. He never won the award.
- Four Hitchcock films were listed in the American Film Institute’s “Ten Best Mystery Films of All Time”: *Vertigo* (#1), *Rear Window* (#3), *North by Northwest* (#7), *Dial M for Murder* (#9).



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"Do you think I consider this recreation?" Jeffries

Discussion Questions and Topics

Questions:

- **Did you spot Hitchcock?**
- **Do you approve of Jeffries' voyeurism? Does the fact that Thorwald was a murderer excuse his actions?**
- **Why is it that Jeffries becomes so fascinated with his neighbors?**
- **Is Jeffries an active or a passive protagonist?**
- **Why is it that Jeffries doesn't ever take a picture of what he sees?**
- **Why do you think James Stewart was cast in this role?**
- **What do you think of the film's view of relationships? Is the film romantic or skeptical in its view of the way people interact?**
- **How does the relationship between Jeffries and Lisa compare to the other characters we see?**
- **What do you think of Stella's (the nurse) assessment that "we're a race of Peeping Toms. What people ought to do is get outside their own house and look in for a change."**

Topics

- Voyeurism
- Suspense vs. surprise
- The film's portrayal of male/female relationships
- Vigilantism
- Neighborly etiquette



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"Nobody ever invented a polite word for a killin' yet." Stella

Library Resources

1) Adaptations: From Short Story to Big Screen, 35 Great Stories that have Inspired Great Films, edited by Stephanie Harrison. Contains Cornell Woolrich's original short story "*It Had To Be Murder*" and information on its adaptation into *Rear Window*.

Copy	Material	Location
791.436 ADA	1 Book	Nonfiction

2) The Women Who Knew Too Much, Tania Modleski. Contains a feminist interpretation of the film.

Copy	Material	Location
791.430233 MOD	1 Book	Nonfiction

3) Alfred Hitchcock: A Life in Darkness and Light, Patrick McGilligan.

Copy	Material	Location
B HITCHCOCK, A. MCG	1 Book	Biography

4) The A-Z of Hitchcock, Howard Maxford.

Copy	Material	Location
791.430233 HITCHCOCK	1 Book	Nonfiction

5) Hitchcock's Notebooks: An Authorized and Illustrated Look Inside the Creative Mind of Alfred Hitchcock, Dan Auiler.

Copy	Material	Location
791.430233 HITCHCOCK	1 Book	Nonfiction

6) Find the Director and other Hitchcock Games, Thomas M. Leitch.

Copy	Material	Location
791.430233 HITCHCOCK	1 Book	Nonfiction

7) Rear Window [videorecording (DVD)]. Just in case you want to see it again!

Copy	Material	Location
DVD REA	1 DVD, Fiction	Audio-Visual – Movies



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"People do a lot of things in private they couldn't possibly explain in public." Lt. Doyle

Online Resources

www.dailyscript.com/scripts/rearwindow.pdf

A PDF copy of John Michael Hayes' classic screenplay.

http://www.labyrinth.net.au/~muffin/rear_window_c.html

An excellent academic essay on the film by Hitchcock biographer Ken Mogg

http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/03/29/rear_window.html

Interesting analysis of the film from the viewpoint of Jeffries' recuperation

<http://www.cnn.com/SHOWBIZ/9712/11/rearwindow.restoration.lat/>

An article about the film's restoration.

<http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Studio/8255/filmog/film5.html>

Contains audio excerpts from the film.

<http://www.time.com/time/columnist/corliss/article/0,9565,557218,00.html>

A Time magazine feature on short story writer Cornell Woolrich

<http://hitchcock.tv/>

A site devoted to Hitchcock, including essays, quotes and upcoming TV screenings of his films.