

Classics

Ninotchka



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I have a confession to make. For years, I had a secret crush on a much older woman. She passed away in 1990 at the age of 84. I was 34 at the time. I only knew her through her films, and one, in particular, stirred me. The woman was Greta Garbo and the film that burrowed a special place in my heart was *Ninotchka*. The script was written by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder and directed by Ernst Lubitsch and tells the story of a down to business, emotionally cold Russian official sent to Paris to check on the status of Russia's sale of the nation's former crown jewels which were being sold to help support Russia's recovery after the revolution. Upon arriving in Paris she finds herself involved in a legal battle with Russia's exiled Grand Duchess for possession of the jewels and finds that the Russian representatives sent originally to sell the jewels seem to have given in to the temptations and pleasures of the rich Paris life. Her mission is complicated by the attentions of Count Leon d'Algout (Melvyn Douglas) who after meeting her on the street is determined to win her heart. Unknown to her is that he is also the lawyer representing the Grand Duchess in court. Unknown to him at the time is her relationship to his case. Can the heart win over political philosophy and the law? [Read more](#)

Posted by Keith C. on September 14, 2016

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[Comedy](#)

[Classics](#)

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[Sights and Sounds](#)

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The Invisible Man (1933)



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Claude Rains was perhaps one of the most recognizable character actors from the classic era of film. He was able to play almost any part. Among his best known roles were Captain Louis Renault in *Casablanca* and Prince John in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. The *Invisible Man* was his first major film role. Prior to this film he had only appeared on screen in one silent film short. The rest of his early acting life had been spent on the hardwood stages. In *The Invisible Man*, Mr. Rains stars as Dr. Jack Griffin, who disappears one day while working in the lab of his friend and mentor Dr. Cranley. His mysterious disappearance from the lab has Flora, Dr. Cranley's daughter and Jack's girlfriend, worried regarding his whereabouts. Unbeknownst to the two of them Jack Griffin has done more than simply walked away from the lab and them. He has literally disappeared, becoming completely invisible. Wrapped in bandages to hide his invisibility he sets up a lab in a local Inn to work on a way to bring himself back to normalcy. Sadly the formula which made him invisible is also affecting his mind and he is becoming more unbalanced and violent as time passes. [Read more](#)

Posted by Keith C. on August 30, 2016

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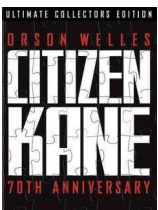
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Citizen Kane



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Citizen Kane tells the fictional story of rich newspaper publisher Charles Foster Kane, his rise to power and eventual decline as he shifts from an idealistic publisher/editor into egotist whose power has gone to his head. It was based loosely on the life of William Randolph Hurst, but not loosely enough to suit Hurst. The film pulled few punches and Hurst was not amused at being the subject, even if indirectly of such a movie. *Citizen Kane* almost completely failed at the box office when it was released and even before the production was finished the film was wrapped in controversy. Director and writer Orson Wells was accused by Hurst of the being a communist, and a homosexual, both of which were considered major issues in 1941. Interestingly he also accused Wells of being a womanizer and Socialist as well. As you can see the accusations leveled at Wells were often contradictory and usually untrue. The major newspapers, owned by Hurst refused to review the film or allow it to be advertised in their pages. In fact, no review of *Citizen Kane*

appeared in any paper owned by Hurst until the mid- seventies over 30 years after its release.

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Posted by Keith C. on August 17, 2016

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The Great Race



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A while back I posted an entry about the 1965 movie *Those Magnificent Men and their Flying Machines*. In that post, I mentioned another film that came out the same year called *The Great Race*. While I am entranced by the old planes in *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying machines*, *The Great Race* is really my favorite of the two. The film stars Tony Curtis as 'The Great Leslie,' a stereotype 1910 pure as gold hero in white and Jack Lemmon as Professor Fate, a stereotype 1910 pure villain in black and tells the story of their race around the world by automobile. Leslie and Professor Fate are not the only cars racing. The race starts with a much larger pack of automobiles; [Read more](#)

Posted by Keith C. on July 21, 2016

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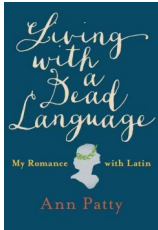
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Living with a Dead Language



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They say that you really learn about a people only when you learn their language. Multiply that for a culture long gone, say, that of the Romans.

This book by a former editor describes her love for Latin-- how she went back to college to study it after thirty-five years in New York City publishing. I can't believe I even picked it up after all my complaints about being forced to take Latin in high school. But the fact that I continued studying the language after the mandatory first two years tells you something.

But this is a book about much more than Latin. It's about following one's passion. Along the way, Ann Patty reveals much about her life. She describes sharing a home with a man entirely opposite herself. Her partner, an arborist, lives for the outdoor life. He hikes and skis, even on the coldest days. She's definitely a city person even though she now lives in upstate New York, often rushing back to the city for cultural events. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on July 11, 2016

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Arsenic and Old Lace



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Mortimer Brewster's aunts Abby and Martha are two of the kindest, most loving women you could ever hope to meet. They are always willing to help others and always seemed to have a kind word for everyone. They raised Mortimer and his brothers Jonathan and Teddy from a young age. Mortimer has developed into a well-rounded young man who works for the city's paper reviewing the theatre. Brother Teddy, while harmless, suffers from the delusion that he is President Theodore Roosevelt. Brother Jonathan, well, the less said about him the better. He was the type of child who enjoyed pulling the wings off of flies and the legs off of spiders. The 'fun' begins when Mortimer is excitedly preparing to share the good news of his coming engagement to the girl next door rather unexpectedly finds a dead body in the window box seat of his Aunts' home. Later that same night his brother Jonathan returns home after a long absence; who after numerous face changing surgeries looks a great deal like the actor Boris Karloff. With him comes an alcoholic plastic surgeon and another dead body. Meanwhile, Teddy seems to be digging body sized locks for the Panama Canal in the basement. [Read more](#)

Posted by Keith C. on July 9, 2016

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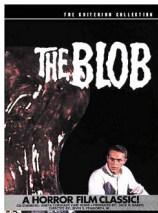
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The Blob (1958)



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If the stories I've heard are true there is a five-gallon bucket somewhere in the United States that contains a batch of red silicone still moist from the 1958 production of *The Blob*.

Supposedly it is brought out and displayed at the annual Blobfest in Phoenixville PA where many of the scenes for the movie were shot. *The Blob* is one of many science fiction movies of the 1950's that told of some unknown horror coming from outer space that endangers the world. A lot of these were extremely low budget and featured extremely bad special effects even taking into account the time they were produced. [Read more](#)

Posted by Keith C. on May 23, 2016

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[DVD](#)

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Casablanca



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I would like to play a game of pretend. Let's pretend that you are one of the most in-demand actors of your time and your contract with the studio says you have to perform in any film they choose. The studio you are working for takes an unknown, unproduced and previously refused

play and begins adapting the play for the screen. They are in such a rush to start production and don't wait for the first draft of the screenplay to be finished before they begin filming. At one point the director calls you on the set and tells you to just stand still and give a short nod of your head towards the camera. You don't know why you are nodding or where the nod will occur in the movie, you are just told to nod. Every day the script changes. Not just the little daily changes common to movies, but massive story changes take place. No one at the start of filming, not even the director, knows exactly how the movie is going to end. The film is half-way through production before the ending is finally settled upon. Can you imagine how unhappy you would be and how horrible you believe the final product would turn out? This is what happened to actors Humphry Bogart and Actress Ingrid Bergman when they starred in a film that when finished won the Best Picture, Best Screen Play, Best Actor and Best Supporting Actor Academy Awards. Since its production in 1942, it has continued to win honors and awards. The play was called "Everyone Comes to Ricks", the movie, *Casablanca*. [Read more](#)

Posted by Keith C. on March 15, 2016

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Frankenstein ? 1931



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The story of Frankenstein's monster has long been one of the staples of horror. The book *Frankenstein*, written by Mary Shelly, wife of poet Percy Shelly is one of the modern horror stories and is also considered one of the earliest science fiction stories. The 1931 movie *Frankenstein* is very loosely based on Mary Shelly's book. One of the most striking differences being that of the appearance of the monster. In the book the monster begins as an almost handsome and well-spoken man and only turns ugly as his skin begins to rot away due to poor blood circulation. For most of us however Frankenstein's monster is best remembered as the large, groaning brute with a flat head and bolt shaped electrodes sticking out of his neck. *Frankenstein* stars Boris Karloff as the monster and Colin Clive as inventor Henry Frankenstein.

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Posted by Keith C. on October 22, 2015

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The Wild, Wild, West ? Television Series



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When I was young, maybe too young as I was only eight at the time, my father introduced me to a series of books by an author named Ian Fleming about an English secret agent known as James Bond. Prior to this my heroes were all from world of television. I was enthralled with the ?Adventures of Superman,? ?Roy Rogers? and ?The Lone Ranger.? As you may have noticed two of my favorite heroes were from westerns. James Bond suddenly took precedence over them all. I loved the intrigue and the action in the books. But I still loved my westerns. Then, in 1964 a television western, *The Wild, Wild West*, set in the mid 1800?s appeared about two agents of the newly established U.S. Secret Service; James West and Artmus Gordon. Each episode had the intrigue and mystery of a secret agent like James Bond as well as the special gadgets and gizmos a spy would use and best of all, it was a western. I was hooked.[Read more](#)
Posted by Keith C. on September 22, 2015

[The wild wild West. Season 1, The complete first season \[videorecording\]](#)

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