

Austin Film Society
Essential Cinema

AND IT FEELS SO GOOD:
COMEDIES OF REMARRIAGE

Nov. 22 – Dec 20, 2011

Alamo S. Lamar

Tuesday nights @ 7:00pm

\$5 for AFS members (free with AFS Film Pass or Sustainer membership)

\$8 all others

Screwball comedies were built on the idea of men and women at war with each other: seduction by way of verbal sparring and improbably sophisticated pratfalls. It was boy meets girl, boy and girl bump heads till the last reel détenté. Some of the very best screwball comedies tweaked that premise by beginning at the end – with a divorced pair (or soon to be divorced pair) pushed back into each other's paths to parry and thrust once more. The philosopher Stanley Cavell coined a term for the subgenre – the comedy of remarriage, he called it – and while its heyday was the late Thirties, the idea of ex-lovers who drive each other crazy, and crazy in love, is eternal. – Kimberley Jones, *Austin Chronicle*, AFS Guest Curator

11.22 THE AWFUL TRUTH

Directed by Leo McCarey

Written by Viña Delmar from a play by Arthur Richman

Cinematography by Joseph Walker

USA, 1937, Columbia Pictures, 35mm, B&W, 91 min.

Cast: Cary Grant, Irene Dunne, Ralph Bellamy, Asta

Before their final divorce decree, Jerry and Lucy each try to ensure the impossibility of new marriages for their about-to-be-former spouses.

Largely a dramatic actor up until this point, a gun-shy Cary Grant offered his bosses \$5,000 *not* to appear in THE AWFUL TRUTH. Good thing they turned him down: The Cary Grant comic persona – silky, sophisticated, mostly unflappable, and utterly charming – was born with this role. He and Irene Dunne are irresistible as soon-to-be exes who can't quite cut the cord. Co-starring Asta the Dog.

11.29 THE PALM BEACH STORY

Written and directed by Preston Sturges

Cinematography by Victor Milner

USA, 1942, Paramount Pictures, 35mm, B&W, 88 min.

Cast: Claudette Colbert, Joel McCrea, Mary Astor, Rudy Vallee

Seeing her husband frustrated by a lack of cash necessary to turn his invention into reality, a loving wife divorces him in order to raise the money by marrying a millionaire.

Claudette Colbert helped launch screwball comedy in Capra's IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT, but it was writer/director Preston Sturges who took screwball to an alternate, exalted plane of lunacy. The Weenie King, the Ale and Quail Club, and the Princess Centimillia are a few of the chorus members accompanying Colbert's Gerry Jeffers on her flight to Palm Beach to get a quickie divorce from her devoted but down-on-his-luck husband (played by Sturges favorite Joel McCrea).

12.06 PHFFFT!

Directed by Mark Robson

Written by George Axelrod

Cinematography by Charles Lang

USA, 1954, Columbia Pictures, 35mm, B&W, 88 min.

Cast: Judy Holliday, Jack Lemmon, Jack Carson, Kim Novak

Eight years of marriage end in divorce, but even in New York City, the former couple keep running into each other.

In only his second starring role, Jack Lemmon plays an income tax lawyer who's grown bored with his marriage to Judy Holliday's TV show-runner. When they split, they explore other avenues – she learns French; he grows a mustache, under the tutelage of his Lothario roommate (Jack Carson) – before the former man and wife bump into each other again on the dance floor in the film's comic high point. Mambo!

12.13 TWO FOR THE ROAD

Directed by Stanley Donen

Written by Frederic Raphael

Cinematography by Christopher Challis

Original music by Henry Mancini

USA, 1967, Twentieth Century-Fox, 35mm, color, 2.35:1, 111 min.

Cast: Audrey Hepburn, Albert Finney

Ten years of marriage punctuated by mutual infidelities seem to be on the verge of ending in divorce.

Re-teaming for the third time with her FUNNY FACE director, Stanley Donen, Audrey Hepburn, that eternal gamine, takes on a fully adult role here, as a London wife on a road trip through Europe with her architect husband (Alfred Finney), mutually mulling a divorce. Using a hop-scotching timeline, Frederick Raphael's ingeniously constructed script charts the marriage's many up and downs, from first meet to (maybe) last rites.

12.12 ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND

Directed by Michel Gondry

Written by Charlie Kaufman

Cinematography by Ellen Kuras

Original music by Jon Brion

USA, 2004, Focus Features, 35mm, color, 1.85:1, 108 min.

Cast: Jim Carrey, Kate Winslet, Elijah Wood, Mark Ruffalo

In the future, the pains of divorce may not be necessary – just have your memories erased, or can it really be that easy?

Can you even call it a comedy when a movie opens with Jim Carrey crying, Beck moping in harmony on the soundtrack? Or when a major plot point involves a memory-erasing machine designed to obliterate all recollection of an ex? ETERNAL SUNSHINE may be the darkest iteration yet of lovers who part, only to be pulled back together again, but it's also a funny, tender, and endlessly inventive examination of why we love who we love, even when we know we shouldn't.