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1930s

This decade includes some of the biggest releases of all time. In 1939 alone “The Wizard of Oz,” “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington,” “Goodbye, Mr. Chips” and “Gone With the Wind” were all released.

“Bachelor Mother” (1939) — This one was remade in 1956 starring Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher but is also a remake of an earlier Hungarian film called “Little Mother.” The story follows Rogers, a single woman, who discovers a baby left on a doorstep and is immediately mistaken for its mother so she decides to raise it as her own. Her boss, a rich playboy played by Niven, is sympathetic to the unwed mother, so he keeps her on after her seasonal position at a department store is finished. The two strike up a friendship and eventually a romance in this quintessential screwball comedy. Stream it on TCMWatch, Amazon Prime, YouTube, iTunes, Google Play or Vudu.

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Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert star in a scene from Frank Capra's 'It Happened One Night.'

“It Happened One Night” (1934) — A delightful comedy starring Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable wherein Colbert plays a rich socialite who, after marrying an aviator, is taken away by her father on his yacht. Then, she jumps ship and runs from him. Gable plays a newspaperman intent on getting the scoop and agrees to help her back to her beau. Rent it from Amazon Prime, YouTube, iTunes, Google Play or Vudu.

“King Kong” (1933) — See the original big ape before he returns to theaters in “Godzilla vs. Kong.” While the stop motion effects may seem crude by today’s standards, they’re good for 1933. Rent it from Amazon Prime, YouTube, iTunes, Google Play or Vudu.

1940s

Ah, the golden age of screwball comedies. Westerns begin to take center stage and Film Noir gets going. The 40s include some incredible wartime satires and delightful musicals aimed to take minds off the atrocities of the real world.

“Adam’s Rib” (1949) — Here, Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy play happily married divorce attorneys, both at the top of their game when they decide to take on opposing clients. The screwball comedy has such poignant moments and elements that are way ahead of its time that it can still capture audiences’ attention. Stream it on TCMWatch, Amazon Prime, YouTube, Google Play or Vudu.



James Cagney, left, stars in a scene from ‘White Heat’ with Edmond O’Brien.

“White Heat” (1949) — This is one of the most recognizable James Cagney gangster movies and one of the best of the genre. Cagney plays a psychopathic criminal leader who is overly attached to his mother. He and his gang are jailed, and when he attempts to break out, the results are explosive. Rent it from Amazon Prime, Google, iTunes, YouTube or Vudu.

“His Girl Friday” (1940) — A fast-talking comedy starring Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell as divorced couple Walter Burns, a newspaper editor, and Hildy Johnson, one of his reporters. Hildy returns to tell Burns that she is engaged to a bland insurance man, quitting journalism and moving to Albany, New York, to raise a family. Burns tries to coax her to stay with an assignment she can’t turn down. Stream it from Amazon Prime, Hoopla, Kanopy, Tubi, Vudu, YouTube or iTunes.

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