

THE 1930's:

A YEAR BY YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

In retrospect, and unlike the 1930s in life, the 1930s on film were a decade of elegance and glamour. Coming of age as they did at just the right moment when America – beginning its slow recovery from the stock market crash and dust bowls needed its inimitable escapist daydream, the movies and '30s Hollywood were both a continuation of that hedonist heyday prior to '29 that had transformed the fledgling industry into an empire. If films did not present the world as it was, they fairly accurately reflected a collective wish fulfillment of American society then, desperate to believe that the worse was behind them and that 'happy days were here again'.

1930

After a chaotic period of retooling their dream factories for sound recording, the movies settled in for a heady decade of production. Ironically, war pictures proved the most popular with Universal's **All Quiet On The Western Front** winning the Best Picture Oscar. As Hollywood struggled with the fact that many of their greatest silent stars spoke with thick foreign accents or perceivable lisps exaggerated by early microphones, the era of the talent scout was born. Actors with even the most scant résumé made the journey to Hollywood in the hopes of becoming famous. While Broadway experience was still regarded as the golden ticket – many on the Great White Way viewed the movies as a debased 'dumb show' from the artistic stature of the stage.

Burgeoning new talents were Jean Harlow and John Wayne. Harlow's inexperience was painfully on display in Howard Hughes' **Hells**





Angels – though two-strip Technicolor and a harrowing bi-plane action sequence seemed to mask her shortcomings where the public was concerned. Wayne appeared as a western extra and stunt rider, churning out an endless string of 'B' movies for Monogram – a poverty row studio. Director John Ford saw something in the lanky young man and recommended him to Raoul Walsh for **The Big Trail** – a film shot in an experimental widescreen process (a precursor to Cinemascope that would stay buried until the 1950s). Wayne was such an abysmal bomb in this movie that his fledgling career practically ended before it had begun.



Comedian Harold Lloyd made one of his last great comedies, *Feet First*. The man of a thousand faces, Lon Chaney starred in his only 'talkie' **The Unholy Three** before succumbing to cancer on Aug. 26. Marlene Dietrich and Humphrey Bogart were signed to studio contracts – she at Paramount, he at Warner Bros. By all accounts, and the ledgers, it was a banner year and the edict from all of the front offices was full steam ahead.

1931

James Cagney and Edward G. Robinson exploded onto the screen in **The Public Enemy** and **Little Caesar** respectively. Moral activists decried both films as glorifications of gangster violence. By now, 85% of movie houses in the United States were equipped for sound; a cumbersome process that still featured massive records recorded in wax and synchronized with the film's projection. Working with inferior equipment, studios nevertheless managed to refine their recording techniques.

(Previous page top: James Stewart and Marlene Dietrich in the western comedy, *Destry Rides Again* 1939. Middle: Stewart again with Eleanor Powell in *Broadway Melody of 1936*. Bottom: Henry Fonda with Bette Davis in *Jezebel* 1936 – the film that won Davis her second Best Actress Oscar. This page top: Nelson Eddy & Jeanette MacDonald at the close of *Maytime*, their most popular period musical. Middle: Norma Shearer and Tyrone Power in MGM's costly *Marie Antoinette* 1938. Bottom: Lionel Barrymore and Edward Arnold look on at the union of James Stewart to Jean Arthur in Frank Capra's Oscar-winning *You Can't Take It With You* 1938.)



The last silent star to speak – Greta Garbo – made a resounding success of Eugene O’Neill’s seedy waterfront melodrama, **Anna Christie**. The wooing of Broadway’s biggest names continued; Lunt and Fontaine reluctantly agreed to appear in MGM’s **The Guardsman** which they had made famous on Broadway. It was a flop that convinced the celebrated duo to return to the stage. They never again appeared in films.

Bette Davis’s fledgling film career at Universal was sandbagged by narrow-minded Carle Lemmler who first, attempted to transform her into a blonde beauty, then went on record with **“She has as much sex-appeal as Slim Summerville!”** Dejected, Davis left Universal after only two movies – **Seed** and **Bad Sister**.

Meanwhile at MGM, a rivalry developed between reigning ‘queen of the lot’ Norma Shearer and aspiring social climber Joan Crawford. **“How can I complete with that?”** Crawford loudly objected, **“She sleeps with the boss!”**

True – but Norma was also the wife of MGM’s VP in Charge of Production, Irving Thalberg. At Universal, relatively soft spoken English actor, Boris Karloff and Hungarian born Bela Lugosi terrorized audiences with definitive versions of **Frankenstein** and **Dracula**. Oscars favored RKO’s **Cimarron** as Best Picture, despite the fact that its elephantine investment practically bankrupted the studio. Statuettes also went to Helen Hayes for **The Sin of Madelon Claudet**. Shot under its working title; **Lullaby** – the project had been shelved, but was resurrected by Thalberg who re-shot the ending and changed its title. The film was a resounding success. Wallace Beery took home Best Actor for **The Champ** – a sentimental melodrama about a washed up prize fighter and his undying devotion to his young son.

(Polar opposites in the romance department, top: in the early 30s Clark Gable’s galvanic star was firmly affixed to that of rising talent, Joan Crawford, seen here in one of their most popular outings; **Possessed** 1931. On screen Gable and Crawford emanated a gritty, ‘too hot to handle’ quality that probably owed more to the fact that off screen they were having a very torrid affair while married to other people. Bottom: fresh faced and wholesome – Dick Powell and Ruby Keeler; the winsome twosome of so many Warner musicals of the 1930s, beginning with **42nd Street** 1933.)





1932

Under Thalberg's guidance, Vicki Baum's **Grand Hotel** became the first all-star movie masterpiece. MGM threw every major talent it had into the production including Joan Crawford, Lionel and John Barrymore and Garbo. At first assuming that Garbo's reclusive nature was akin to snobbishness, John Barrymore soon became a life long admirer and friend after realizing that the screen's most enigmatic star suffered from acute insecurity in front of the camera. "***You have no idea what it means to me to appear opposite so great a star as you,***" Garbo reportedly told Barrymore on the set. He was instantly smitten.

Joan Crawford, who regretted that her co-star billing offered her no scenes opposite Garbo, gave her most startling performance as Sadie Thompson in **Rain** – a colossal flop. New England blue blood, Katherine Hepburn appeared in **Bill of Divorcement** for RKO and was hailed "***the find of the year.***" But her subsequent appearance in **Christopher Strong** did much to brand her 'box office poison' just a few short years later. Cecil B. DeMille made the Biblical epic, **The Sign of the Cross**. In one scene from that film, Claudette Colbert takes a bath in goat's milk. A stickler for authenticity, De Mille used real goat's milk in the scene, but the excessively hot arc lights curdled it into cheese.

Director Todd Browning produced one of the most bizarre horror movies of all time, **Freaks** – the story of a trapeze artist who seduces a midget and then plans to murder him for his money. Jean Harlow and Clark Gable sizzled in **Red Dust** and Paul Muni gave one of his most indelible performances as **Scarface**. Warner star, George Arliss became single-handedly responsible for resurrecting Bette Davis' sagging career with **The Man Who Played God**. Davis was a disheartened Universal Studios' discard on an east bound train when Arliss encouraged her to co-star opposite him. He was also instrumental at recommending to Jack Warner that Davis be put under contract.

Following the resounding success of **42nd Street**, Busby Berkeley became the most celebrated hot property on the Warner backlot. Olympic swimmer, Johnny Weissmuller debuted opposite Maureen O'Sullivan in **Tarzan The Ape Man**. Their skimpy costumes prompted outrage from the Catholic League of Decency. In Germany, Chancellor Adolph Hitler banned the film. At Oscar time, Walt Disney received a special citation for the creation of Mickey Mouse – then as big





a star as Garbo in Hollywood. Oscars too for Fredric March's chilling performance in **Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde** and **Grand Hotel** – Best Picture.

1933

Mary Pickford – once dubbed America's sweetheart – made her last screen appearance in **Secrets**. Pickford's popularity had waned since the talkies and with all her wealth and popularity in tact she wisely chose the private life instead. Barbara Stanwyck's sexual escapades in **Baby Face** prompted cries of moral outrage from the pulpit. **The Three Stooges** debuted minus their former boss, Ted Healy in a Columbia 2-reel comedy – **Women Haters**. It would be the first of over 200 shorts made at the studio.



Rival producer on the MGM back lot, David O. Selznick made his own all-star spectacle; the delightful drawing room comedy, **Dinner At Eight**. Director Frank Capra produced two films of artistic merit; the epic **The Bitter Tea of General Yen** and poignantly sentimental **Lady for A Day** – only the latter proved successful. Radio crooner Bing Crosby made the most of a deal at Paramount, but a similar attempt to acclimatize popular radio personality Kate Smith with a forgettable project, **Hello Everybody!** miserably flopped.



At Warner Bros., choreographer Busby Berkeley continued his upswing in staging bizarre and gargantuan musical production numbers with 'By A Waterfall' – an aqua-ballet that added considerably to the budget of **Footlight Parade**. Warner Bros. also had the most talent of four-legged stars Rin Tin Tin performing in another installment to their B-movie series; **The Wolf Dog**.

At Paramount, The Marx Bros. stage smash, **Duck Soup** became a sublime anti-establishment movie that failed to catch on at the box office.

Cary Grant – who, despite good looks - had been struggling to make inroads, scored a coup opposite risqué Mae West in **She Done Him Wrong**. In the decade that followed, West would publicly claim to have 'discovered' Grant – an outright lie that infuriated the actor to no end.

(Previous page top: bawdy, gaudy Mae West. Bottom: Robert Taylor locked in a dying embrace with Garbo's ill-fated courtesan in *Camille* 1936. This page top: Crawford's stenographer has just discovered that her boss (Wallace Beery) has murdered the Baron Von Geigern (John Barrymore) in *Grand Hotel* 1932. Cary Grant and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. exchange barbs between dances in *Gunga Din* 1939. Bottom: Grant again, this time with an exuberant Katharine Hepburn in *Holiday* 1938. The film tackled the importance of self worth vs. capitalism.)

Maverick showman and film producer Marian C. Cooper and David O. Selznick convinced a financially beleaguered RKO to fund **King Kong** – a visceral and technically proficient masterwork in the sci-fi/horror genre that made a household name out of a little known actress – Fay Wray.

Garbo gave a towering, if sexually ambiguous, performance as **Queen Christina** – her hinted lesbianism prompting a growing need for film censorship. Kate Hepburn scored in **Morning Glory** – taking home the Best Actress Oscar. Charles Laughton in **The Private Lives of Henry VIII** won Best Actor. 20th Century-Fox's familial tragedy, **Cavalcade** – Best Picture. Silent star Renee Adoree died of a respiratory ailment. Disgraced pie-faced and rotund comedian Fatty Arbuckle was stricken by a fatal heart attack.

1934



W.S. Van Dyke made Dashiell Hammett's **The Thin Man** in just 12 days on a shoe string budget; one of the most adroit detective pictures to emerge from Hollywood in years. Shirley Temple became Fox's number one star after **Stand Up and Cheer** and **Little Miss Marker** – outranking such heavyweights in screen popularity and fan mail as Clark Gable, Joan Crawford and Mickey Rooney. Of his pint size costar, Adolph Menjou commented, **"She knows all the tricks. She's Ethel Barrymore at age six!"**



On the more lavish side was Thalberg's **The Merry Widow** with Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette MacDonald – a titanic hit. Other intoxicating confections that found favor with the public included **The Barretts of Wimpole Street**, **Broadway Bill**, **Imitation of Life** and **Twentieth Century**.



Frank Capra scored for Columbia Pictures with **It Happened One Night** – a film no one except Capra had any faith in. Upon its completion, costar Claudette Colbert lamented **"I've just made the worst picture of my career."** Colbert won the Oscar for her efforts. Ditto for Clark Gable, who had been loaned to Columbia as punishment for refusing a part for his alma mater - MGM. Gable's lack of undergarments in a key scene in the film caused sales of undershirts to plummet nationwide. Oscars too for Best Film and Best Director: Frank Capra – the first film to sweep all the major Oscar categories.



(Top: Leslie Howard and the luminous Ingrid Bergman in **Intermezzo: A Love Story** 1939. Selznick wanted Howard for **Gone With The Wind** but could only get the actor to sign on if he was allowed to produce as well as star in this remake of a Swedish movie that also starred Bergman. Middle: Clark Gable and Les Blondes in **Idiot's Delight** 1939. Middle: Mickey Rooney with his most popular costar, Judy Garland posing for a still from **Love Finds Andy Hardy** 1938, the most profitable of the Andy Hardy series. Bottom: Ronald Colman is greeted by H.B. Warner who welcomes him to Shangri La in Frank Capra's **Lost Horizon** 1936 – the most expensive movie produced that year.)



DeMille was up to his old tricks, casting Claudette Colbert as **Cleopatra**; a lavish exercise in hedonism that set cash registers ringing. Colbert also appeared in one of the most progressive Hollywood films of the decade; **Imitation of Life**; a quiet examination of race relations and their tragic fallout – costarring Louise Beavers.

Imminent playwright George Bernard Shaw put in his own two cents about the increasing popularity of the movies with **“Cedric Hardwicke is my fifth favorite actor, the first four being The Marx Brothers!”**

1935

After defying studio edict and attempting to make a film away from Warner Brothers in England, Bette Davis was corralled back into the fold, winning an Oscar as the incendiary bitch in **Dangerous**. In the trades: Joseph Schenck appointed Darryl F. Zanuck production head of 20th Century-Fox. Zanuck, a film maker at heart, would become the driving force of that studio for the next 3 decades.

David O. Selznick launched his own independent production company – Selznick International. **Becky Sharp** – became the first film to be photographed in the newly perfected 3-strip Technicolor process. A high-gloss reworking of Thackeray’s literary classic **Vanity Fair** it was colorful and epic but flopped at the box office. So too did success prove illusive for Warner Bros. lavish attempt at fantasy with Shakespeare’s **A Mid-Summer Night’s Dream**. Still, there were other reasons to rejoice at WB, particularly after new arrival on the Warner back, Tasmania born Errol Flynn donned tights and indulged in swordplay opposite Basil Rathbone for **Captain Blood** – an unqualified smash.

Amiable Fred MacMurray, suave Charles Boyer and wholesome Ann Sheridan were three new faces who showed promise with bright futures ahead. Robert Taylor became MGM’s latest heartthrob. Musicals and costume dramas proved the most satisfying genres to audiences; David O. Selznick’s meticulously crafted **David Copperfield**; Garbo’s version of **Anna Karenina**; Gary Cooper’s star turn in **Lives of a Bengal Lancer**; Nelson Eddie and Jeanette MacDonald’s most glorious operetta, **Naughty Marietta** and Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers best film to day - **Top Hat** among the year’s most illustrious output.

(Top: Jefferson Smith (James Stewart) arrives at the Lincoln Memorial in **Mr. Smith Goes To Washington** 1939. Middle: Cary Grant and Jean Arthur console one another after a plane crash claims the life of a young pilot in Howard Hawks’ **Only Angels Have Wings** 1939. Bottom: Garbo as the sexually ambiguous forlorn monarch doomed to loneliness in the final reel in **Queen Christina** 1933).



Only three years earlier – Astaire’s screen test at RKO had come back with the hand written note; **“Can’t act. Can’t sing. Balding. Can dance a little.”** He was by 1935, already considered the premiere dancer in American movies. Time has done little to diminish this latter assessment of the Astaire style.

Best Picture to MGM’s **Mutiny on the Bounty** – a thrilling sea epic starring Clark Gable. America’s most celebrated moralist, Will Rogers perished in a plane crash leaving 20th Century-Fox without its most bankable star. More mysterious was the sudden passing of gifted Thelma Todd – a death/murder/suicide never fully explained away.



1936

As far as film product was concerned – few years in Hollywood’s most recent history could compare in quality; Gary Cooper’s poignant turn in Frank Capra’s **Mr. Deeds Goes to Town**; William Powell’s refreshing and adroit handling of an affluent butler in **My Man Godfrey**, Universal’s version of **Show Boat**; Gable’s celebrated disaster epic, **San Francisco**; Garbo’s great tragedy, **Camille**; Astaire and Rogers best musical to date, **Swing Time**; Norma Shearer in **Romeo & Juliet**; Nelson Eddie as a singing Mounted Policeman in **Rose Marie** and the gargantuan beyond all expectations, **The Great Ziegfeld** topped everyone’s favorite ‘must see’ list.



‘Ziegfeld’ also won Best Picture. Viennese actress Luise Rainer took home the first of her two consecutive statuettes as the year’s Best Actress. Color photography, publicly denounced as inconsequential by producer Irving Thalberg, made a splashing addendum to the otherwise leaden **The Garden of Allah** –an overblown melodrama produced by Selznick that bore the unmistakable producer’s hallmark for meticulous craftsmanship and attention to detail. Charlie Chaplin had one of his most acclaimed triumphs with **Modern Times** – a tale about the dehumanization of factory workers.





A note of tragedy: 40 year old silent matinee idol, John Gilbert drank himself to death and was laid to rest at the start of the year. Two shake ups in corporate management rounded out the year – top heavy mismanagement deposed Carle Lemmle Jr. from Universal Pictures in favor of Charles R. Rogers. MGM's V.P, Irving Thalberg died suddenly of a heart attack, leaving L.B. Mayer in charge of the studio. Thalberg was a mere 35 years old.

1937

Seventy percent of the world's entertainment was being made in Hollywood. The best of the lot; the Oscar-winning, **The Good Earth**; Selznick's **The Prisoner of Zenda**; Columbia's zany screwball, **The Awful Truth**; RKO's frankly funny **Stage Door** and harrowing disaster epic, **The Hurricane**, MGM's poignant **Captain's Courageous** and Frank Capra's most ambitious project to date, **Lost Horizon** all attested to a high standard of quality in studio craftsmanship.

But the most celebrated coup of the year was a project that had initially been snubbed and dubbed in the press as "Disney's folly" – **Snow White & The Seven Dwarfs**. Once completed, it merged as the most spellbinding of the year's entertainments. Borrowing against his own life insurance policy, Walt staked both his reputation and future success on the first full length animated feature. The gamble paid off handsomely.

(Previous page top: Columbia's most celebrated comedians, The Three Stooges in one of their many shorts from the 1930s. The Stooges reign at Columbia would span three decades and yield more than 200 short subjects. Center: the memorable revolving staircase carrying Virginia Bruce and Dennis Morgan to the tune of Irving Berlin's A Pretty Girl Is Like A Melody from *The Great Ziegfeld* 1936. Errol Flynn and Olivia De Havilland share a tender moment in *The Charge of the Light Brigade* 1936. This page: the reigning dance duo of this or any other decade – Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, seen here doing *The Continental* from *The Gay Divorcee* 1936. Next page top: Elsa Lanchester as *The Bride of Frankenstein* 1935. Middle: Irene Dunne and Cary Grant in a pensive moment from Leo McCarey's masterful screwball comedy, *The Awful Truth* 1937. Bottom: Ronald Colman with Madeleine Carroll in Selznick's *The Prisoner of Zenda* 1936.)

MGM's **A Family Affair** launched a successful film series with Mickey Rooney playing the irrepressible teenager in perpetual love and heartache, Andy Hardy. Screen siren Jean Harlow collapsed on the set of **Saratoga** and died at the age of 26 from uremia three days later, forcing MGM to use a double in long shot to complete the film. Clark Gable, Harlow's costar followed up this project with his only flop for MGM; **Parnell**.

A new discovery, Hedy LaMarr made her American screen debut. By now the film censorship production code wielded absolute authority over what was seen on the screen. When L.B. Mayer discovered LaMarr had appeared in the raw in a Czechoslovakian film – *Ecstasy* - his first question was **"Did you look good?"**

"Of course," LaMarr replied.
"Then everything's alright!" Mayer reasoned.



1938

Marie Antoinette – a project begun in earnest under Thalberg's regime in 1936 and starring his widow, Norma Shearer finally made it to the screen; heavily revised, shortened, and, shot in B&W instead of color. It was a success but one whose extravagances L.B. Mayer was determined not to repeat. Television was in its experimental stages. It would debut at the New York World's Fair one year later before being quashed by the onslaught of WWII.



Big ticket items of the year were **Boy's Town** (for which Spencer Tracy won an Oscar), **The Adventures of Tom Sawyer**, George Cukor's sublime anti-capitalist comedy, **Holiday** and Errol Flynn's most lavish swashbuckler to date; in Technicolor - **The Adventures of Robin Hood**. Cary Grant played it stuffy in Howard Hawk's riotous **Bringing Up Baby** a film ahead of its time that oddly enough was an abysmal flop at the box office. Said Grant of the role – **"I don't care how ugly they make me in pictures if they just let me play a part with character and substance."**

Determined to rival MGM's supremacy in musicals, Darryl F. Zanuck premiered his costliest film to date; 20th Century-Fox's **Alexander's Ragtime Band** starring studio heartthrob, Tyrone Power. Clark Gable's reputation as a he-man was kept in tact with **Test Pilot** – a high flying adventure flick. New faces with a bright future ahead of them included William Holden, John Garfield, Betty Grable, Roy Rogers, John Payne and David Niven – the latter briefly glimpsed the year before in **The Prisoner of Zenda**. Jean





Renoir's **Grand Illusion** and Alfred Hitchcock's **The Lady Vanishes** – both imports from France and England respectively were hugely successful with American audiences. But it was Warner Brothers' **The Life of Emile Zola**, starring Paul Muni that took home the Best Picture Oscar.

1939

The year it all came together. Hollywood produced more contenders for the Best Picture Oscar in this single year than at any other time. The list seems endless, but the best of the best included George Steven's **Gunga Din**; Frank Capra's **Mr. Smith Goes to Washington**; Samuel Goldwyn's **Wuthering Heights**; George Cukor's **The Women** and John Ford's **Stagecoach** (that finally made a star out of John Wayne – cast as the loveable desperado; the Ringo Kid).

Relatively unknown, soft spoken British actor Robert Donat walked off with the Best Actor honors for his touching and thoughtful performance in **Goodbye Mr. Chips**. The film co-starred Greer Garson – who would become one of the most popular leading ladies of the '40s at MGM and whom L.B. Mayer had first discovered in a play in London's West End.

Series films were at their zenith with installments to **Andy Hardy**, **Tarzan**, **The Thin Man**, **Sherlock Holmes**, **Maise** and **Dr. Kildare** immensely contributing to the studios coffers. Garbo finally appeared in a comedy, and one of the best – **Ninotchka**. A year later she would retire from the screen.



Swedish discovery, Ingrid Bergman was luminous opposite Leslie Howard in **Intermezzo: A Love Story**. But the really big news of the year belonged to two Technicolor super-productions: MGM's **The Wizard of Oz** and Selznick International's **Gone With The Wind**.

Oz made Judy Garland, already a rising star at MGM, a household name. She took home the Oscar for Best Performance by a juvenile. She also costarred with Mickey Rooney for the first of their *'hey kids, let's put on a show'* musical spectaculars, **Babes in Arms** later that same year. Despite the fact that lines were forming around the block for tickets to **Oz** at five-thirty in the morning, the elephantine overhead of the production caused it to lose money on its initial theatrical release.

Bette Davis – who had desperately wanted to play Scarlett O'Hara was well compensated for the loss by starring in back to back successes at Warner Brothers; **The Private Lives of Elizabeth & Essex**, **The Old Maid**, **Dark Victory** and **Juarez**. Only **Dark Victory** garnered Davis an Oscar nomination as Best Actress – playing a New England socialite fatally stricken with a brain tumor. Badgered by Davis to quantify the reasons why she had not been chosen to play Scarlett in **Gone With The Wind**, producer Selznick curtly replied, ***"Because I can't imagine any man chasing a girl around for three hours and winding up with you!"*** The truth of the matter probably had more to do with the fact that Davis had already won an Oscar going Southern for Warner Bros. **Jezebel** the year before. In fact, early in **GWTW's** development, Jack Warner had offered Selznick Davis and Errol Flynn, plus a money deal to bankroll part of the production. Selznick, who realized the public would accept no one but Clark Gable as Rhett Butler, quietly refused Warner's offer in totem.



GWTW's Vivien Leigh – a virtual unknown to American audiences towered above the rest to win Best Actress as Scarlett O'Hara. Hattie McDaniel became the first African American so honored with a statuette – as the defiant Mammie. The film also went on to win a record 9 Oscars from a record 11 nominations, including Best Picture and Best Director. Rhett Butler's classic rebuttal to Scarlett ***"Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn,"*** was heavily contested by the Production Code. Selznick defended the word 'damn' as neither an oath nor a curse and was eventually allowed to leave it in the finished film. Afterward, he was fined \$5,000.00.

Gable – who refused to attempt a Southern accent for the film, had his animal magnetism cemented for posterity when madcap comedian and lover Carole Lombard told a Los Angeles paper – ***“Clark’s a wonder. I’m really nuts about him...Not just nuts about his nuts!”***

By all accounts 1939 should have been the beginning of something big for the film industry. Instead, with the encroachment of Hitler’s forces decimating the European market and plunging the rest of the world into conflict, it was the end of the yellow brick road, both for Hollywood and the world at large, for many long years to come.

(Previous pages: Myrna Loy, William Powell and Asta in *The Thin Man* 1932. Top: Norma Shearer embraces Joan Crawford as Rosalind Russell looks on during a photo shoot on the set of *The Women* 1939. In reality, Crawford despised Shearer – mostly because the actress received star treatment in part due to her marriage to MGM’s VP Irving Thalberg. The fact that Norma also happened to be a great actress was another reason for Crawford’s public animosity toward her.)

Previous page bottom: a young Walt Disney stands in the shadow of his greatest creation – Mickey Mouse. At the start of the decade, Mickey was the most widely celebrated animated creation in the history of the movies. By the end of the decade, Disney would have even greater cause to rejoice. His *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1938) was a colossal financial hit. This page, below: Tyrone Power confides his fears about the future of Ranchipur, India to nurse Myrna Loy in *The Rains Came* 1939 – one of the most exceptional films produced at 20th Century Fox during the 1930s.)

