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Garbo



Grand Hotel

(1932, 105 min.) Directed by Edmund Goulding. Produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Screenplay by William A. Drake. Adapted from the play by Vicky Baum. Photographed by William Daniels. Edited by Blanche Sewell.

Grusinskaya	Greta Garbo
Baron von Gaigern	John Barrymore
Flaemmchen	Joan Crawford
Preysing	Wallace Beery
Otto Kringelein	Lionel Barrymore
Dr. Otternschlag	Lewis Stone
Senf	Jean Hersholt
Meierheim	Robert McWade
Zinnowitz	Purnell B. Pratt
Pimenov	Ferdinand Gottschalk
Suzette	Rafaela Ottiano
Chauffeur	Morgan Wallace
Gerstenkorn	Tully Marshall

"Although *Grand Hotel* is plainly melodrama, smartened up with a cosmopolitan veneer, and is neither a great play nor presents anything more than snapshots of character, Miss Leontovich, who created your role in the New York stage production, rewrote the script in terms of her own Slavic temperament; and managed to make us feel the heroine as a woman in pain, a disillusioned being, reconciled to life by a brief passion and once more hopelessly at odds with life when the fire was extinguished. But you, gracefully going through the motions of acting in this picture, let reality slide, inspired us with no agony on your behalf, lived little yourself. Your reflection of the heroine's tempestuous changes of mood was a surface artifice, overacted and without inner flame. And your gaiety was stillborn, unconvincing. —Mary Cass Canfield, "Letter to Garbo," *Theatre Arts Monthly* (1932)

"Greta Garbo, although she is not on the screen to a predominant degree, is the ultimate and only excuse for the expense to which Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer must have gone to produce *Grand Hotel*. To say that she acted magnificently is to say less than half. She had about her that quality of gratuitous

alchemy, of incandescent glamor which one hears associated with Rejane, Bernhardt and Duse. A little boy was once taken to the Comedie Francaise... to hear a great actress recite Racine, and though he was too young to know what she was doing, or even undersand the melody Sarah spoke, he clung close to his mother and wept 'Maman, j'ai peur.' Garbo can induce a similar quality of emotion. Her action has little to do with 'Life,' and nothing to do with 'reality.' It is something in itself, in a way over and above itself. When she comes in from the failure of the ballet and sinks on the floor in her stiff tarletans, the white gauze butterflies wilting on her shoulders, she is the essence of a fragrant and exquisite disappointment. She wears nostalgia like a shawl, and when she dances around her suite chasing her manager in an ecstasy of a recaptured passion it is, simply, indescribable. *Grand Hotel* is the first picture in which Garbo has had a real chance to show what she could do free from the strictures of a close direction, however developed. She has become more compassionate and less bitter, more glowing and less smouldering — more controlled and supple and on a much grander scale. Her action is a free cadenza on the theme of any given emotion, whether it is recognition, exhaustion, impatience, hysteria or love." —Lincoln Kirstein, *Arts Weekly* (1932)

"From her first line, 'I have never been so tired in my life,' Greta Garbo sets the movie in vibration with her extraordinary presence. She is a *première danseuse* whose career is fading, a weary, disillusioned woman briefly reconciled to life by a passion for a shady nobleman—John Barrymore. Garbo was only twenty-six when she played this role (Barrymore was fifty), but the fatigue, the despair seem genuine. Intellectually you have to reject *Grand Hotel* as an elaborate chunk of artifice and hocus-pocus: there are no redeeming qualities in Vicki Baum's excruciating concepts of character and fate, and anyone who comes to see this movie expecting an intelligent script or even 'good acting' should have his head examined. But if you want to see what screen glamour used to be and what, originally, 'stars' were, this is perhaps the best example of all time." —Pauline Kael, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*