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Author(s)	David Stewart Hull
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# Dartmouth Film Society

## MARNIE (1964)

Mark Rutland  
Marnie  
Lil Mainwaring  
Sidney Strutt  
Bernice Edgar  
Cousin Bob  
Mr. Rutland

Sean Connery  
Tippi Hedren  
Diane Baker  
Martin Gabel  
Louise Latham  
Bob Sweeney  
Alan Napier

Sam Ward  
Susan Claborn  
Sailor  
First Detective  
Rita  
Mrs. Turpin

S. John Launer  
Mariette Hartley  
Bruce Dern  
Henry Beckman  
Edith Evanson  
Meg Wyllie

Scenario by Jay Presson Allen from the novel by Winston Graham. Photographed in Technicolor by Robert Burks. Edited by George Tomasini. Production design by Robert Boyle. Pictorial design by Albert Whitlock. Music by Bernard Herrmann. Sound by Waldon O. Watson and William Green. Assistant director, James H. Brown. Assistant to Mr. Hitchcock, Peggy Robertson. A Universal Picture, released June 9, 1964.

Produced and directed by ALFRED HITCHCOCK

With our presentation of MARNIE, the Dartmouth Film Society concludes a three term retrospective of the films of Alfred Hitchcock. Twenty-six of the director's forty-nine films released to date have been screened on our series; two silents, and twenty-four of the thirty-nine sound films. A complete Hitchcock filmography is listed at the conclusion of this article with those titles we have shown underlined.

MARNIE was the film with which Hitchcock hoped to tempt Grace Kelly back to the screen. When she turned him down, the role went to the rather inexperienced Tippi Hedren, who had earlier starred in THE BIRDS. (As a footnote, Hitchcock, interviewed in Variety last week, revealed that his three biggest moneymakers were 1. PSYCHO; 2. NORTH BY NORTHWEST; 3. THE BIRDS. He also said that his only film which didn't make a profit at the box-office was THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY, which he accounts to lack of "star" names.) THE BIRDS received bad reviews, but apparently did excellent business; MARNIE received lethal reviews and seems to have died a horrible death at the box-office.

This was unfortunate, because MARNIE is an extremely interesting film despite what appear at first glance to be horrible lapses in style and "taste". In his book on Hitchcock, British critic Robin Wood devotes a great deal of space to the film, although his arguments in favor of the film are not as persuasive as his campaign on behalf of such works as REAR WINDOW and VERTIGO.

He begins by listing the objections to the film, "in ascending order of intelligence." They are worth reprinting here.

"1. The film is full of absurdly clumsy, lazy, crude devices, used with a blatant disregard for realism: hideous painted back-drop for Mrs. Edgar's street; ugly and obvious back-projection for Marnie's horse riding; zoom-lens for the final attempted theft; red-flashes suffusing the screen every time Marnie has a 'turn'; thunderstorms arriving coincidentally at climatic moments.

"2. Connected with this technical naivete, a psychological naivete: Marnie's case is much too simple and schematized to be taken seriously, the single traumatic experience, as shown in the flash-back, wouldn't affect her in these ways. Besides, there are actual inconsistencies, obviously due to mere carelessness: Marnie passes a red chair during the Rutland office robbery and doesn't react; she almost touches a scarlet magazine, actually laying a pistol on it, when taking Mark's key, again without reacting.

"3. (Though most people don't take the film seriously enough to reach this conclusion)-- Marnie's case is much too extreme for the film to have any universal validity."

These objections are dismissed, one by one, point by point, in the following twenty pages, which obviously can't be reprinted in toto here. Summarized, Mr. Wood would seem to say:

1. The film never pretends to be realistic, so the painted backdrop is quite acceptable. It reflects the unreality of Marnie's life. (Obviously that famous backdrop is there for a reason, since there is no earthly reason why Hitchcock had to shoot the scenes in which it figures in long shot; close-ups would have been possible, eliminating the background). The purpose. The zoom-lens reflects Marnie's own feelings; we are in her place for a moment rather than merely observing her. Ditto the red flashes, which convey panic with the utmost simplicity.



The thunderstorm is merely another stylistic device. In short, the film is unrealistic, and so are its devices.

2. "There are two possible answers to the accusation that a given film is psychologically naive: that it isn't, and that it wouldn't matter if it were." The psychology shown in the film is simple, but not as simple as it seems at first; viewers will note at the end of the film that Marnie is far from being "cured." Since the red chair is not used against the heroine (as are some other red objects) Hitchcock is quite right to ignore it. She does not react to the magazine because she is already in a state of shock and quite oblivious to it.

3. "We are not concerned with Marnie's case simply as a case. Hitchcock gives us here a sort of quintessence of neuroticism rather than a clinical case history, and if Marnie is extreme, she represents an extreme of something relevant to us all: the grip of the past on the present."

While some of Mr. Wood's excuses are not entirely satisfying, they do help to give us a new insight on the film. With the complaints out of the way, there is much to praise in the film.

Mr. Wood points out that MARNIE has many links to VERTIGO; if the film was told from the viewpoint of Mark instead of Marnie, it would be very similar indeed. The combination of Mark-Marnie-Lil can be compared to that of Scottie-Madeleine-Midge, and certainly this is not an accident. But Mark is a much stronger hero than Scottie, or any other leading man of the previous Hitchcock films, even if he is an unpleasant character from time to time.

The most remarkable part of the film is probably the use of color; if the story does not please, the visuals can keep our interest. The scene of the yellow bag at the very opening sets the style, for everything else there is blue or grey. Later the yellow turns up in the Rutland house: a vest, a yellow cake, chrysanthemums, roses, lampshades, pajamas, dressing gowns. Individual scenes are played in different colors. One of the best jokes (and certainly Hitchcock's most outrageous joke in years) is to set one scene in a Howard Johnson restaurant purely for the color values.

The acting has its ups and downs. Miss Hedren was certainly not experienced enough for such a difficult role, and Mr. Connery is stiff and uneasy. However, Diane Baker is excellent (as always) and Martin Gabel is superb as the nasty Sidney Strutt. And again there can be nothing but praise for Robert Burks' shimmering camerawork, and Bernard Herrmann's musical score, which reprises some of the VERTIGO themes from time to time.

If MARNIE is not a Hitchcock masterpiece, it is still an entertaining film, and a much better work than we had been led to believe by unsympathetic critics.

David Stewart Hull

We wish to thank Mr. Philip Gerard of Universal Pictures for helping us to obtain a copy of MARNIE for our program.

Films of Alfred Hitchcock, underlined titles shown in our retrospective: The Pleasure Garden (1925); The Mountain Eagle (1926); The Lodger (1926); Downhill (1927); Easy Virtue (1927); The Ring (1927); The Farmer's Wife (1928); Champagne (1928); The Manxman (1929); Blackmail (1929); Juno and the Paycock (1930); Murder (1930); The Skin Game (1931); Rich and Strange (1932); Number 17 (1932); Waltzes from Vienna (1933); The Man Who Knew Too Much (1934); The 39 Steps (1935); The Secret Agent (1936); Sabotage (1936); Young and Innocent (1937); The Lady Vanishes (1938); Jamaica Inn (1939); Rebecca (1940); Foreign Correspondent (1940); Mr. and Mrs. Smith (1941); Suspicion (1941); Saboteur (1942); Shadow of a Doubt (1943); Lifeboat (1944); Spellbound (1945); Notorious (1946); The Paradine Case (1947); Rope (1948); Under Capricorn (1949); Stage Fright (1950); Strangers on a Train (1951); I Confess (1953); Dial M for Murder (1954); Rear Window (1954); To Catch a Thief (1955); The Trouble With Harry (1956); The Man Who Knew Too Much (1956); The Wrong Man (1957); Vertigo (1958); North by Northwest (1959); Psycho (1960); The Birds (1963); Marnie (1964). In addition, Hitchcock co-directed several early silent films, directed two shorts in the French language in 1944, and personally directed nineteen of his television programs.

Our next program is THE PASSION OF JOAN OF ARC (1928) directed by Carl Dreyer, presented Tuesday, May 17th, at 4 & 8:30 pm.