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battlefields by Soviet and Chinese cameramen, and released in 1953 as a joint Soviet-Chinese production. Seldom have newsreel cameramen enjoyed the professional equipment apparently available to those who filmed the last battles of the Civil War: the results include some sweeping epic sequences, as well as illuminating close-ups of the fighting. The film's commentary relates the background and chronology of the struggle, covering the period from the first Civil War in 1928 to the Victory Day Celebration in Peking in October 1949.

Saturday, August

12

THE FILMS OF BUSTER KEATON (6)
BATTLING BUTLER (1926, 75 min)
& THE PLAYHOUSE (1921, 20 min)

4:30 & 7:30

Keaton frequently remarked that *BATTLING BUTLER* was his best feature. Most critics consider it his weakest: Whatever it's position in his work, it's pure Keaton and better than any comedy Hollywood has produced in recent years. The story involves a case of mistaken identity between two Alfred Butlers: one is a foppish son of a millionaire (Keaton), the other is the world's heavyweight champion (Francis McDonald). Inevitably, both butlers square off in the ring.

THE *PLAYHOUSE* finds Buster playing all nine members of an orchestra in one unbelievable sequence managed by elaborate masking of the camera lens. Keaton was the kind of genius who could invent AND perfect cinematic techniques at the same time. In another scene, he gives a hilarious impersonation of a gorilla.

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA (1935, 93 min)

9:30, 11:15

This film (and the Marx Brothers) need no introduction: besides, its madness is beyond any criticism.

Sunday, August

13

THE FILMS OF PRESTON STURGES (7)
MIRACLE OF MORGAN'S CREEK (1944, 99 min)

7:00, 10:30

James Agee, who considered Sturges the most talented man in Hollywood as well as the most neurotic, was one of the few reviewers of the time who understood what Sturges was up to in his satires of American types and institutions. He wrote very perceptively on Sturges, and following are some excerpts from his review of *MIRACLE OF MORGAN'S CREEK*: "The new Preston Sturges film seems to me funnier, more adventurous, more abundant, more intelligent, and more encouraging than anything that has been made in Hollywood for years . . . The essential story is hardly what you would expect to see on an American screen: a volcanically burgeoning small-town girl (Betty Hutton) gets drunk, and is impregnated by one of several soldiers, she can't remember which: her father (William Demarest), her younger sister (Diana Lynn), and her devoted 4-F lover (Eddie Bracken) do all they can to help her out: the result is a shambles, from which they are all delivered by a 'miracle' which entails its own cynical comments on the sanctity of law, order, parenthood, and the American home . . . to say nothing of cherished pseudo-folk beliefs about bright-lipped youth, childhood sweethearts, Mister Right, and the glamour of war. Sturges tells his story according to a sound principle which has been neglected in Hollywood—except by him—for a long time: in proportion to the inanity and repressiveness of the age you live in, play the age as comedy if you want to get away with murder. Thanks to these devices the Hays Office has either been hypnotized into a liberality for which it should be thanked, or raped in its sleep."

MY MAN GODFREY (1936, 95 mins)

8:45

One of the great screwball comedies of the thirties, *MY MAN GODFREY* was directed by Gregory La Cava, and if you've read Frank Capra's

Leaves from Satan's Notebook

autobiography you know what a reputation La Cava enjoyed among his colleagues as a master of comic improvisation on the set. His best films live and breathe an air of spontaneous invention that places them slightly outside the mechanical grooves of formula-made farce. *MY MAN GODFREY* was unavailable for many years, having been superseded by the inane remake with June Allyson. William Powell plays one of the "nouveaux poor," ruined by the depression and reduced to employment as a butler for a group of addle-brained socialites. It's a great film to have back again. With Carole Lombard.

Monday, August

14

THE COMEDIES OF ERNST LUBITSCH (7)
TO BE OR NOT TO BE (1942, 99 min)

7 & 10:15

A comedy involving a group of Polish actors and their attempts to outwit the Nazis, this film was a commercial failure in 1942 (only Lubitsch and Chaplin dared satirize the Nazis during the war years) and was rarely seen until very recently. It's just beginning to get the recognition it deserves as one of the funniest black comedies ever made, although both Godard and Chabrol long ago ranked it among the top ten American films of all time. Jack Benny stars in an inspired casting as a Polish Hamlet: Carole Lombard shines in what was tragically her last performance; and Sig Rumann is a scream as "Concentration Camp Earhardt."

A MAN'S CASTLE (1933, 75 mins)

8:45

Frank Borzage was one of the screen's great romanticists and if the response to the four Borzage films on this schedule warrants, we'll gladly mount a large retrospective of his films next year. *A MAN'S CASTLE* is one of his masterpieces, in which an authentically rendered depression background takes the sentimental edge off the central love story which finds Spencer Tracy shackled-up with Loretta Young (20 years old at the time) in a makeshift tin-can residence in a squatter's colony. The fact that they go skinny-dipping together in the Hudson River and conceive a child out of wedlock disturbed a few censors back in 1933, and will no doubt surprise many viewers today. But the real surprise of the film is Borzage's fluid and truly cinematic *mise-en-scene*.

Tuesday, August

15

JESUS IN THE CINEMA (8)
LEAVES FROM SATAN'S
NOTEBOOK (1919-21, 120 min)

7:00

Modeled on *INTOLFRANCE*, Carl Dreyer's second film tells—consecutively, not concurrently—four stories of religious and political persecution set in different historical periods: Jerusalem at the time of Christ's betrayal by Judas; The Spanish Inquisition; The French Revolution; and finally the Russo-Finnish War of 1918. The portrayal of Christ is extremely mature and naturalistic: in its emphasis on Semitic faces and cultural authenticity, this episode foreshadows what Dreyer might have achieved in his long-cherished project to make a feature-length life of Christ. All four episodes reflect Dreyer's life-long preoccupation with the dark side of life, his fascination with cruelty and death, his anguished compassion. Filmed on orthochromatic stock, the photography anticipates the distinctive functionalism and flawless composition of his later *JOAN OF ARC*. There are even some close-ups (in the last section) as breath-takingly beautiful and moving as anything he later shot.

AU HAZARD BALTHAZAR (1968, 100 min)

9:30

Placed together, these two films in effect are a continuation of our recent *TRANSCENDENTAL STYLE IN FILM* series, coordinated by Paul Schrader. The pairing of Bresson and Dreyer was a key programming concept in illustrating Schrader's



thesis (published in book form by UC Press). *BALTHAZAR* is one of Bresson's most accessible works. His technique is still spare and minimal, but here it works in inverse proportion to the emotion produced in the spectator. Balthazar is a donkey who is both witness and victim of all-too-human suffering and violence: Anne Wiazemsky plays the French farm girl who befriends Balthazar, and shares some of his fate. The scene of Balthazar's death on a mountainside, among a flock of grazing sheep, affects more than an identification with Christ: it is a moment of hushed and sacred beauty, truly a sublime illumination of innocence too profound for this world.

Wednesday, August

16

TOM TOM THE PIPER'S SON (1969, 96 min)

7:30

Structuralist film-maker Ken Jacobs has taken a film made in 1905 entitled *TOM, TOM, THE PIPER'S SON* and used it as the foundation for an ambitious exploration into the nature of film. The entire work is a detailed analysis of each moment and movement of the original 10-minute silent one-reeler, in which two boys and a piglet romp around barns and cottages. Writing in *ART FORUM*, Manny Farber placed the film on his list of the year's Ten Best, and noted: "The major part of an hour-long film is of not-totally abstract shapes in which there is enough of the specific pig-heret-fold to make for the movie's trademark spiritual richness. Jacobs' image of the wide black-white crumpled stripes in a boy's pants or the goose-like neckline and unswept hair of a Chardin maid not only ravishes the eye but moves the spirit, much like a Seurat conte sketch on rough, pebbled paper. All of his pioneer moves—matting out whole areas, blurring, using the closest close-up on an elbow crease are for going beyond illusionism, illustration, into a spirit world: what should be pure picturesque because of the quaint-corny material is really a turbulent experience of an analytic sensibility."

RIOT IN CELL BLOCK 11 (1954, 80 min)

9:30

According to Peter Bogdanovich *RIOT IN CELL BLOCK 11* "is still the best prison picture to come out of the U.S." Its relevance today is particularly acute. Don Siegel considers it his first major work (it precedes *BODY SNATCHERS* by two years), and he attributes its success as a protest film to producer Walter Wanger, who also produced many of the protest classics of the 30's. Siegel says: "We shot the picture the way we thought it would have happened—with no tricks, no crooked District Attorney, no girl friend of a prisoner. The prisoners storming into the courtyard were real prisoners. It was scary. We shot the picture in 16 days, at a total cost of less than \$300,000, and it was an instant success . . ." With Neville Brand. 35mm print.