

Document Citation

Title	'40s melodrama 'Caught' returns
Author(s)	Kevin Thomas
Source	<i>Los Angeles Times</i>
Date	1978 Jul 19
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Caught, Ophüls, Max, 1949

The LOS ANGELES TIMES

July 19, 1978

MOVIE REVIEW

'40s Melodrama 'Caught' Returns

BY KEVIN THOMAS

Times Staff Writer

The Vagabond's revival last May of Max Ophuls' "Letter From an Unknown Woman" (1948), the masterpiece of Ophuls' American period, was so successful that it has been brought back for another week's run along with another of Ophuls' Hollywood-made films, the tense, beautifully wrought romantic melodrama "Caught" (1949), starring Barbara Bel Geddes, James Mason and Robert Ryan.

As with "Letter From an Unknown Woman," "Caught" has not been shown in local theaters for decades. What's more, the Vagabond has the first-rate original 35mm print, which shows off Lee Garmes' superbly moody black-and-white cinematography to fullest advantage.

It's reliably reported that not long before his untimely death in 1973, Robert Ryan told an audience of college students that not only was his character patterned after Howard Hughes—as legend has long had it—but also that Hughes knew about it and even encouraged Ryan to play him "like an s.o.b."

It's Barbara Bel Geddes, however, and not Ryan who's the central figure of "Caught," which was adapted by Arthur Laurents (from Libbie Block's novel "Wild Calendar") with the same perceptiveness that characterized his latest work, the script for "Turning Point." In a wonderfully natural performance, Miss Bel Geddes plays one of Ophuls' classic romantics, a rather naive young woman in pursuit of a Prince Charming instead of a sugar daddy.

Unfortunately for her, she meets and marries one of America's richest men (Ryan), who has proposed to her in defiance of his psychiatrist (Art Smith). In her misery, Miss Bel Geddes flees Ryan's Long Island mansion to take a low-paying job as a receptionist to a idealistic Lower East Side pediatrician (James Mason).

Although "Caught" fits comfortably into the category of '40s melodrama, it transcends its genre thanks to Ophuls' expressiveness and compassion. Ryan's tyrannical tycoon is a tragically sick man, and as sympathetic as Miss Bel Geddes is, she discovers her romantic fantasizing has given her some highly distorted values. While "Caught" may not be in the sublime league of "Letter From an Unknown Woman," it has not lost its power to involve and is a must for cineastes.