

## Document Citation

Title	<b>The great gangster pictures -- excerpt</b>
Author(s)	James Robert Parish Michael R. Pitts
Source	<i>Scarecrow Press</i>
Date	1976
Type	book excerpt
Language	English
Pagination	143-145
No. of Pages	2
Subjects	
Film Subjects	A free soul, Brown, Clarence, 1931



If the plot seems suspiciously familiar, it was used again, shortly after, for Spy Ship (1942).

**FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES** (MGM, 1971) C-102 min.

Producers, Lester Persky, Lewis M. Allen; co-producer, Donald Ginsberg; director, Harvey Hart; based on the play by John Herbert; screenplay, Herbert; music, Galt MacDermot; songs, MacDermot; MacDermot and William Dumaeso; Michael Greet; choreography, Jill Courtney; production designer, Earl G. Preston; costumes, Marcel Carpenter; makeup, Jacques Lafleur; assistant director, Arthur Voronka; sound, Joseph Champagne, Alban Streeter; camera, George Dufaux; editor, Douglas Robertson.

Wendell Burton (Smith); Michael Greet (Queenie); Zooey Hall (Rocky); Danny Freedman (Mona); Larry Perkins (Screwdriver); James Barron (Holy Face Peters); Lazaro Perez (Catso); Jon Granik (Sergeant Gritt); Tom Harvey (Warden Gasher); Hugh Webster (Rabbit); Kirk McColl (Guard Sullivan); Vance Davis (Sailor); Robert Goodier (Doctor); Cathy Wiele (Cathy); Georges Allard (Fiddler); Modesto (One Eye); Robert Saab (Drummer); Michel Gilbert (Young Prisoner).

Public tastes, as reflected by censor boards, for many years decreed that the subject of sexual perversion within prison be deleted from scenarios. Occasionally, a cagey script writer would work subtle inferences about the subject's unusual sexual inclinations into the storyline, legitimately pointing out that often there was and is a strong link between criminal behavior, gangland camaraderie, prison isolation-segregation, and sexual makeup.

By the sexually-"liberated" Sixties, off-Broadway was ready to explore the subject with Fortune and Men's Eyes, which had a 382-performance run in 1967. Two years later, Sal Mineo directed a highly-touted and controversial revival of the drama, his production being noted for its use of onstage nudity.

The film version, shot in Canada, was overly cautious in its presentation of the subject of prison homosexuality. Although R-rated, it was very tame and hardly lived up to its advertising campaign: "It's a crime what goes on in prison."

The narrative focused on Smitty (Burton), a young college student sent to prison for six months on a marijuana possession charge. His cellmates include the flagrant drag queen named Queenie (Greer), a tough hustler (Hall), and a sensitive gay type (Freedman). Paralleling Smitty's toughening under the rigors of prison life is his capitulation and then aggressive behavior as a circumstantially-induced homosexual.

Granted that both the play original (especially in the Mineo version) and the film edition were nothing better than mild soap opera, there was more to Fortune and Men's Eyes than merely tagging it "The Boys in the Band Go to Jail." It was a pathfinding film venture that unfortunately has not been followed up with well-intentioned variations (there have been other exploitive pornographic features dealing with sex life in men and women's prisons).

"Like so many other pictures that tackle controversial topics,

this release exploits rather than explores its material. As a result, sensationalism obscures a multitude of serious issues.... Undoubtedly, the tortured, jealous relationships, the gang rapes, the tacit sanction of every sort of depravity and degradation by guards, the indifference of top-level authorities depicted in this intensely theatrical film take place in prisons the world over. But ... [here it] remains unconvincing because it invariably aims for shock rather than credibility or enlightenment" (Los Angeles Times).

**FOUR WALLS** (MGM, 1928) 6,620'

Director, William Nigh; based on the play by Dand Burnet, George Abbott; continuity, Alice D. G. Miller; titles, Joe Farnham; sets, Cedric Gibbons; wardrobe, David Dox; camera, James Howe; editor, Harry Reynolds.

John Gilbert (Benny); Joan Crawford (Frieda); Vera Gordon (Mrs. Horowitz); Carmel Myers (Bertha); Robert Emmett O'Connor (Sullivan); Louis Natheaux (Monk); Jack Byron (Duke Roma).

Stars John Gilbert and Joan Crawford gave Four Walls whatever life it had and, due to Gilbert's extreme popularity, the movie enjoyed considerable box-office success.

Neighborhood gang leader Benny (Gilbert) is convicted of murdering his rival and is sent to prison. While behind bars he decides to go straight with the help of his mother (Gordon) and a good girl (Myers) who befriends him. While he is away, Benny's gang is taken over by an underling (Natheaux) who also inherits his moll (Crawford). After four years Benny is released from prison. Now reformed, he will have nothing to do with his old pals. One night, however, after his girlfriend rejects him, he goes to a party where a rival gang attacks his former buddies. Drawn into action, he takes command again. Later he escapes with Frieda. Monk pursues them, but he falls to his death from a rooftop, and the film concludes with Benny being acquitted of his rival's murder.

Variety labeled the picture as "well done" and especially like Nigh's direction "... for its reality, restraint and knowledge of his element." Like many films made in the late silent period, Four Walls had no dialog but it did have a theme song of the same title which was co-written by Al Jolson. Jolson recorded the tune for Brunswick Records, which may well be the only real memorable result of the film. The recording was reissued in 1973 by Pelican Records on an LP called The Vintage Jolson.

**A FREE SOUL** (MGM, 1931) 91 min.

Director, Clarence Brown; based on the book by Adela Rogers St. John; screenplay, John Meehan; sound, Anstruther MacDonald; camera, William Daniels; editor, Hugh Wynn.

Norma Shearer (Jan Ashe); Lionel Barrymore (Steve Ashe); Clark Gable (Ace Wilfong); Leslie Howard (Dwight Winthrop); James Gleason (Eddie); Lucy Beaumont (Grandmother Ashe); Claire Whitney

THE GREAT GANGSTER PICTURES  
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Clark Gable and Norma Shearer in A Free Soul (1931).

(Aunt Helen); Frank Sheridan (Prosecuting Attorney); E. Alyn Warren (Bottomley--Ace's Chinese Boy); George Irving (Johnson--Defense Attorney); Edward Brophy (Slouch); William Stacy (Dick); James Donlin (Reporter); Sam McDaniel (Valet); Lee Phelps (Court Clerk); Roscoe Ates (Men's Room Patron Who Is Shot At); Larry Steers (Casino Proprietor); Francis Ford (Skidrow Drunk); Henry Hall (Detective).

Adapted from Adela Rogers St. John's novel, this film was based somewhat on the author's early life and that of her famous father, Los Angeles attorney Earl Rogers. It proved to be one of the projects which launched the movie career of Clark Gable. In addition, for his work in A Free Soul, Lionel Barrymore received the 1931 Academy Award for Best Actor.

Steve Ashe is a hard-drinking, rebellious attorney who is not well liked by his strait-laced family, especially after he brings a gangster figure (Gable) to his mother's (Beaumont) birthday gathering. Ashe and Wilfong are asked to leave the celebration and they do so with the lawyer's motherless daughter (Shearer). Infatuated by the handsome if disreputable Ace, the spoiled Jan soon shows a preference for him over her former beau, Dwight Winthrop. Later she becomes his mistress, but Ashe refuses to allow her to marry

him. Thereafter Ashe and Jan make a pact. She agrees to stop seeing Ace, if Ashe will stop drinking. However, he is too addicted to his alcoholic ways. She returns to Wilfong, and, in one of the early 1930s most memorable movie moments, he slugs her. Instead of being offended, she is thrilled. When the hoodlum tries to rape Jan, Dwight appears on the scene. He saves her "honor," kills Ace, and is himself arrested. Jan locates her near-derelict father and urges him to help Dwight. To save the day, Ashe makes a courtroom confession to the crime, saying that his association with underworld figures led his impressionable daughter to this unpleasant situation. Steve is later gunned by Ace's mob.

Some called A Free Soul overly melodramatic and sordid. But most viewers were intrigued by the anything-goes air about the production. Moreover, the chemistry between the Queen of the MGM lot, Shearer, and newcomer Gable was electric, and was heightened further by Barrymore's dynamic presence. Shearer's noteworthy performance as a girl burning with animal sexuality was the type of characterization which was to disappear after the formation of the Legion of Decency and the takeover by the Hays office. But the theme of the society girl intrigued with the sordid world of criminals would recur over and over again in forthcoming screen dramas.

A Free Soul had a lacklustre updating when it served as the Elizabeth Taylor-Fernando Lamas picture, The Girl Who Had Everything. By 1953 most of the subject matter within A Free Soul had become tiresome clichés.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1971) C-104 min.

Executive producer, G. David Schine; producer, Philip D'Antoni; associate producer, Kenneth Utt; director, William Friedkin; based on the book by Robin Moore; screenplay, Ernest Tidyman; art director, Ben Kazaskow; set decorator, Ed Garzero; music-music director, Don Ellis; technical consultants, Eddie Egan, Sonny Grosso; stunt co-ordinator, Bill Hickman; sound, Chris Newman, Theodore Soderberg; special effects, Sass Bedig; camera, Owen Roizman; editor, Jerry Greenberg.

Gene Hackman (Jimmy "Popeye" Doyle); Fernando Rey (Alain Charnier); Roy Scheider (Buddy Russo); Tony Lo Bianco (Sal Boca); Marcel Bozzuffi (Pierre Nicoli); Frederic de Pasquale (Devereaux); Bill Hickman (Mulderig); Ann Rebbot (Marie Charnier); Harold Gary (Weinstock); Arlene Farber (Angie Boca); Eddie Egan (Simonson); Andre Ernotte (La Valle); Sonny Grosso (Klein); Pat McDermott (Chemist); Alan Weeks (Drug Pusher); Al Fann (Informant); Irving Abrahams (Police Mechanic); Randy Jurgenson (Police Sergeant); William Coke (Motorman); The Three Degrees (Themselves).

One of the all-time top-grossing thrillers (\$27.5 million), The French Connection collected a bundle of Academy Awards, including Best Film and Best Actor (Gene Hackman) for 1971. Shot on location in New York City and based on Robin Moore's bestseller, the movie set a pattern for many cop confession stories that