

DECEMBER 14—  
JANUARY 3

JACQUES  
TOURNEUR,  
FEARMAKER

film  
society  
lincoln  
center

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TICKETS: [FILMLINC.ORG](http://FILMLINC.ORG)

The son of Maurice Tourneur, one of early French cinema's preeminent directors, Jacques Tourneur ranks among the most fascinating yet most elusive filmmakers of his time. After working as an editor for his father and a director of shorts and B-features at MGM in his adoptive America, Tourneur eventually found a home in Hollywood with the success of his 1942 horror movie *Cat People*. He went on to make a series of striking low-budget pictures in the 1940s and '50s: distinct, atmospheric works in a variety of genres (including the landmark 1947 noir *Out of the Past*), all notable for their wit, irony, and simultaneous precision and ambiguity. Tourneur mixed the uncanny with the psychological, located even the most outlandish premises within familiar spheres, and roguishly circumvented financial constraints through his singular artistry. This winter, the Film Society is pleased to present a wide-ranging retrospective of Tourneur's body of work, the largest in New York City in decades.

*Organized by Dennis Lim and Tyler Wilson in partnership with the Locarno Film Festival, where a Jacques Tourneur retrospective was presented in 2017, curated by Roberto Turigliatto and Rinaldo Censi, in collaboration with the Cinémathèque Française in Paris and the Cinémathèque Suisse in Lausanne.*

**Acknowledgments:** Academy Film Archive; British Film Institute; The Cinémathèque of the City of Luxembourg; Cineteca di Bologna; Eye Filmmuseum; Library of Congress; UCLA Film & Television Archive



Photo by Frank Powolny/20th Century Fox/Kobal/REX/Shutterstock



## ANNE OF THE INDIES

**USA, 1951, 81m**

One of the most unique and fascinating swashbucklers of the studio era stars a commanding Jean Peters as a notorious pirate who captains a ship of plunderers terrorizing the West Indies, duels with Blackbeard himself, and exacts ruthless revenge on any man who double-crosses her—"the vilest-hearted she-monster that ever came out of the sea," according to the suave French officer Pierre (Louis Jordan). Throughout, Tourneur fills every inch of the frame with teeming action and movement, emphasizing both the dreamy beauty of the Technicolor images and, as the proceedings turn increasingly lurid, the savage darkness at the story's center.

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**Saturday, December 22 3:45pm**

**Wednesday, December 26 6:30pm**



Photo by Rex/Kobal/REX/Shutterstock

## APPOINTMENT IN HONDURAS

**USA, 1953, 79m**

Tourneur's mastery of mood and unsettling ambiguity transform a diverting jungle adventure into something resembling existential horror. Glenn Ford plays a hard-bitten political operative leading hostages played by Ann Sheridan and Zachary Scott on a treacherous mission through the Central American rainforest—envisioned as a primeval anti-paradise quivering with menace and the ever-present threat of death. Forgoing narrative drive in favor of hallucinatory visuals and doom-laden atmosphere, *Appointment in Honduras* is, observes Tourneur scholar Chris Fujiwara, "a rare example of a Hollywood film that offers a formal experience comparable to contemporary avant-garde art."

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**Friday, December 21 3:15pm**

**Saturday, December 29 1:30pm**



Courtesy of Warner Brothers

## BERLIN EXPRESS

USA, 1948, 35mm, 87m

Shot on location amid the ravages of post-war Frankfurt and Berlin, this crackling espionage thriller plays like Hollywood's answer to the European rubble films of the era. En route from Paris to Berlin, a motley crew of international strangers—including Robert Ryan's American government worker and Merle Oberon's mysterious French secretary—find themselves thrown together in the fight to save a German peace activist from assassination. A tour through the ruined monuments and smoky underground cabarets of Germany's hollowed-out cities, *Berlin Express* artfully blends shadowy intrigue with a genuinely moving plea for tolerance in the face of nationalism, hatred, and fear. Print preserved by The Library of Congress.

**Wednesday, December 19 7:00pm**

**Tuesday, December 25 6:30pm**



Photo by Universal/Kobal/REX/Shutterstock

## CANYON PASSAGE

USA, 1946, 35mm, 92m

Ablaze in breathtaking Technicolor, the first of Tourneur's remarkable Westerns is a complex, morally ambiguous portrait of an Oregon mining community where the friendship between an enterprising merchant (Dana Andrews) and an avaricious gambler (Brian Donlevy) is tested by romantic rivalry, gold, and greed. An unusually rich, philosophical frontier tale, *Canyon Passage* conjures a dreamily idyllic vision of the Old West punctuated by sudden, shocking bursts of violence—Tourneurian flashes of a world ruled by chaos and chance. The result is what Martin Scorsese has called “one of the most mysterious and exquisite examples of the Western genre ever made.”

**Friday, December 21 7:00pm**

**Monday, December 24 6:30pm**

**Friday, December 28 9:00pm**



Courtesy of Warner Brothers

## CAT PEOPLE

**USA, 1942, 35mm, 73m**

A Serbian woman (Simone Simon) believes she is cursed to transform into a murderous feline after engaging in any kind of intimacy with her American lover (Kent Smith) in the most successful of the Val Lewton-produced horror films. *Cat People*, made as a B picture with few special effects and changes in scenery, redefined Tourneur as a visionary filmmaker who bore a singular aesthetic under financial constraint. The film offers a palpable sense of dread and innuendo, and an inventive use of sound that effectively complements the film's interplay of light and shadow. Print preserved by the Library of Congress.

*Preceded by:*

## THE SHIP THAT DIED

**USA, 1938, 35mm, 10m**

This short explores the many theories surrounding the mysterious disappearance of the merchant ship Mary Celeste in 1872. Print courtesy of the British Film Institute.

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**Friday, December 14 7:00pm**

**Saturday, December 22 9:15pm**

**Monday, December 31 7:15pm**



Courtesy of Films sans Frontières

## CIRCLE OF DANGER

**UK, 1951, 35mm, 86m**

This brooding, slow-burn mystery is a disquieting, echt-Tourneurian inquiry into the frighteningly elusive nature of truth. Ray Milland is a surly American who travels to England in hopes of getting to the bottom of his brother's suspicious death during the war—but the more he finds out, the less he seems to know. Amplifying the pervasive sense of anticipatory dread, Tourneur manages to make even the bucolic landscapes of the English countryside hum with menace, while offering a rarity in mid-20th century cinema: a queer character (played by Powell and Pressburger regular Marius Goring) of unusual courage and complexity. Print courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

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**Tuesday, December 18 7:00pm**

**Saturday, December 29 5:00pm**





Courtesy of Paik Circus/MGM Studios

## THE COMEDY OF TERRORS

USA, 1964, 35mm, 84m

Produced by American International Pictures as a follow-up to Roger Corman's hit *The Raven*, this marvelously goofball horror spoof brings together a dream team of genre greats: Vincent Price as a booze-hound undertaker who takes matters into his own hands when the dead body business dries up; Peter Lorre as his much-kicked-around assistant; Boris Karloff as a doddering, dearly hated father-in-law; and, out-hamming them all, Basil Rathbone as a Shakespeare-spouting would-be victim who just won't die. Tourneur's smoothly atmospheric style provides an ideal canvas for his stable of veteran scene-chewers to let loose their mischievous screwball interplay.

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**Wednesday, December 26 8:30pm**

**Monday, December 31 3:30pm**



Courtesy of Warner Brothers

## DAYS OF GLORY

USA, 1944, 35mm, 86m

Tourneur's first assignment at RKO following his hugely successful collaborations with Val Lewton stars a debuting Gregory Peck as the leader of a band of Russian guerrilla fighters grappling with questions of loyalty, love, and duty as they combat Nazi forces. One of a handful of pro-Soviet films made by Hollywood during World War II that would quickly fall out of favor in the HUAC era, *Days of Glory* avoids propagandistic bombast thanks to Tourneur's sensitive, understated direction. The result is one of the filmmaker's most neglected works: a subtly atmospheric, surprisingly affecting portrait of ordinary people swept up in the tide of history. Print courtesy of the British Film Institute.

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**Monday, December 24 2:30pm**

**Wednesday, January 2 7:00pm**



## DOCTORS DON'T TELL

**USA, 1941, 35mm, 65m**

Just before he propelled the B movie to new heights in *Cat People*, Tourneur directed this seldom-seen crime drama for Poverty Row stalwart Republic Pictures. Flashes of the director's sophisticated visual sense enliven the story of two friends and physicians (John Beal and Edward Norris) vying for the love of the same woman (Florence Rice) even as they embark on wildly different paths: one as the state medical examiner, the other as doctor to the gangland underworld. Studded with outré musical numbers and oddball comedy, *Doctors Don't Tell* is an ultra-rare curio from a master filmmaker on the cusp of artistic breakthrough. Print courtesy of the British Film Institute.

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**Sunday, December 23 5:15pm**

**Friday, December 28 3:30pm**



## EASY LIVING

**USA, 1949, 35mm, 77m**

Money, sex, and football: the three cornerstones of American life spell doom in Tourneur's tough, subversive anti-marriage melodrama. Victor Mature is a star quarterback with a fatal heart condition who's willing to risk death on the field to give his power-hungry wife (Lizabeth Scott) the life she wants, even as she pursues a sordid affair with a Wall Street sugar daddy. Co-starring Lucille Ball—who delivers some of the film's most memorable moments as a hard-nosed working girl spouting world-weary cynicisms—*Easy Living* is a Sirkian sports movie with a dark noir undercurrent. Print courtesy of the British Film Institute.

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**Sunday, December 30 4:45pm**

**Thursday, January 3 3:15pm**



Courtesy of Warner Brothers

## EXPERIMENT PERILOUS

USA, 1944, 35mm, 91m

An unsung gothic gem amongst Tourneur's extraordinary 1940s work, this mood-drenched psychological mystery bristles with an air of anxious uncertainty. A chance encounter aboard a train plunges an inquisitive doctor (George Brent) into sinister goings-on at a turn-of-the-century Manhattan mansion, where the disturbed wife (Hedy Lamarr) of a wealthy social lion may—or may not—be going mad. Told in a complex web of flashbacks and shifting viewpoints, *Experiment Perilous* is an unsettlingly ambiguous tale of illusion versus reality etched in some of Tourneur's most intricate mise en scène—including a startlingly surreal climactic image worthy of Magritte.

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**Tuesday, December 18 8:45pm**

**Tuesday, January 1 7:00pm**



Courtesy of Park Circus/MGM Studios

## THE FEARMAKERS

USA, 1958, 35mm, 85m

The “fearmakers” in the title of Tourneur's rarely screened Red Scare thriller are communist elements that, having wormed their way into a major Washington PR firm, go about trying to convert the American public away from their capitalist roots. Dana Andrews, who stars as a brainwashed Korean War vet alert to the dark secret of the firm to which he's just returned, had worked with Tourneur on *Night of the Demon* the previous year, and it was he who insisted that Tourneur be brought on to direct *The Fearmakers*. What attracted the filmmaker to the project was, he later suggested, a theme that he'd been dealing with explicitly since at least *I Walked with a Zombie*: “The power of people who control ideas.”

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**Monday, December 24 4:30pm**

**Sunday, December 30 3:00pm**

**Thursday, January 3 8:45pm**





## THE FLAME AND THE ARROW

**USA, 1950, 35mm, 88m**

Burt Lancaster's megawatt grin and acrobatic athleticism light up this grandly entertaining swashbuckler. He tumbles, vaults, and swings his way through the role of a Robin Hood-esque rogue who executes dazzling feats of derring-do as he and his rough-and-ready band of mountain men launch a rebellion against the occupying German gentry in 12th-century Italy. The filmmaker's powers as an aesthete are on full display in the exquisite Technicolor compositions, including one particularly striking moment of Tourneurian shadow play: a climactic duel in the dark wrought in finely shaded chiaroscuro.

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**Friday, December 21 9:00pm**

**Monday, December 31 5:15pm**



## FRONTIER RANGERS

**USA, 1959, 16mm, 83m**

In the 1950s and '60s, Tourneur increasingly turned to television work, directing several episodes of the short-lived series *Northwest Passage*, three of which comprise this rollicking, feature-length adventure. Set during the French and Indian War, *Frontier Rangers* traces the exploits of intrepid partisan fighter Major Robert Rogers (Keith Larsen) as he tracks down an enemy spy, rescues a trio of women (including Angie Dickinson) from indentured servitude, and sets out to discover the mythic Northwest Passage. Despite the project's small-screen origins, Tourneur's touch shines through in the scenic splendor and typically expert choreography of action and movement. Print courtesy of the Academy Film Archive.

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**Sunday, December 23 3:00pm**

**Thursday, December 27 7:00pm**



## THE GIANT OF MARATHON

Jacques Tourneur, Bruno Vailati, and  
Mario Bava, Italy/France, 1959, 35mm,  
90m

**Italian with English subtitles**

Like so many other veteran Hollywood film-makers in the 1950s, Tourneur decamped for Italy to direct this sword-and-sandal spectacular. The Herculean physique of bodybuilder turned international peplum icon Steve Reeves stars as Philippides, an ancient Greek Olympic hero who must navigate traitorous political machinations and wily seduction schemes as he leads the Athenian charge against the Persians in the Battle of Marathon. Shot and partially directed by Mario Bava—who helmed the film’s striking, hallucinatory underwater fight sequences—*The Giant of Marathon* is a fascinating union between Tourneur’s understated refinement and the Italian maestro’s boldly stylized vision. Print courtesy of Cineteca di Bologna.

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**Wednesday, December 26 3:00pm**

**Sunday, December 30 6:30pm**



## GREAT DAY IN THE MORNING

USA, 1956, 35mm, 92m

Tourneur’s moral and aesthetic complexity elevates this dark, anti-heroic western. Set on the brink of the Civil War, the deceptively titled *Great Day in the Morning* stars Robert Stack as a smooth-talking, opportunistic Southerner who drifts into Denver, his presence inflaming the already heated tensions between the Yankees and Confederates—and between two women he caddishly pursues, played by Virginia Mayo and Ruth Roman. As the film circles around themes of greed, jealousy, and violence, its increasingly sinister tone is mirrored by Tourneur’s intricate mise en scène, which begins in soft pastel hues and ends in noir shadows.

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**Thursday, December 20 9:00pm**

**Friday, December 28 5:00pm**

**Tuesday, January 1 3:00pm**



## I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE

**USA, 1943, 35mm, 68m**

In Tourneur's second collaboration with Val Lewton, a Canadian nurse working on an island in the West Indies turns to voodoo with the hope of curing her patient. Loosely based on *Jane Eyre*, *I Walked with a Zombie* features a quite peculiar romance, and is perhaps Tourneur's most poetic film: a haunting, audacious studio picture that presents a complex meditation on colonialism and our relationship with the past, as seen here through the living's uncanny connection to the dead. Print preserved by The Library of Congress.

*Preceded by:*

## THE KING WITHOUT A CROWN

**USA, 1937, 35mm, 10m**

This MGM "Historical Mystery" considers the possibility that Marie Antoinette's son Louis XVII fled to the U.S. during the French Revolution and was raised to be a missionary among Native Americans. Print courtesy UCLA Film & Television Archive.

**Friday, December 14 9:00pm**

**Saturday, December 22 7:45pm**

**Wednesday, January 2 9:00pm**



## THE LEOPARD MAN

**USA, 1943, 35mm, 65m**

Tourneur's third collaboration with Val Lewton is this adaptation of Cornell Woolrich's novel *Black Alibi*, concerning a black leopard that escapes during a publicity stunt and becomes the suspect in a killing spree upending a quiet New Mexico town. Like in *Cat People* and *I Walked with a Zombie*, *The Leopard Man* stations real sentiments about racism, xenophobia, and fear of the other within its somewhat outlandish horror narrative, and makes particularly chilling use of music and sound: the trilling of castanets never conjured such dread as in this film.

*Preceded by:*

## THE MAN IN THE BARN

**USA, 1937, 35mm, 10m**

This bizarre short presents a conspiracy theory that John Wilkes Booth successfully fled to Oklahoma after assassinating Abraham Lincoln.

**Wednesday, December 19 9:00pm**

**Tuesday, December 25 4:45pm**

**Sunday, December 30 8:15pm**

FOR TICKETS: FILMLINC.ORG

# SCHEDULE

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14

- 5:30** Nick Carter, Master Detective +  
Reward Unlimited
- 7:00** Cat People + The Ship That Died
- 9:00** I Walked with a Zombie +  
The King Without a Crown

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15

- 5:15** Out of the Past
- 7:15** Nightfall + What Do You Think
- 9:15** Night of the Demon

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16

No screenings

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 17

No screenings

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 18

- 7:00** Circle of Danger
- 8:45** Expermient Perilous

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19

- 7:00** Berlin Express
- 9:00** The Leopard Man +  
The Man in the Barn

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20

- 7:00** Stars in My Crown
- 9:00** Great Day in the Morning

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21

- 3:15** Appointment in Honduras
- 5:00** Timbuktu
- 7:00** Canyon Passage
- 9:00** The Flame and the Arrow

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22

- 1:30** Shorts Program
- 3:45** Anne of the Indies
- 5:45** Way of a Gaucho
- 7:45** I Walked with a Zombie +  
The King Without a Crown
- 9:15** Cat People + The Ship That Died

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23

- 1:30** Phantom Raiders
- 3:00** Frontier Rangers
- 5:15** Doctors Don't Tell
- 6:45** Wichita
- 8:30** Stranger on Horseback

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 24

- 2:30** Days of Glory
- 4:30** The Fearmakers
- 6:30** Canyon Passage
- 8:30** Night of the Demon

## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25

- 3:15** Nick Carter, Master Detective +  
Reward Unlimited
- 4:45** The Leopard Man +  
The Man in the Barn
- 6:30** Berlin Express
- 8:30** Out of the Past

## WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26

- 3:00** The Giant of Marathon
- 4:45** War-Gods of the Deep
- 6:30** Anne of the Indies
- 8:30** The Comedy of Terrors

Screening in the Walter Reade Theater December 14–20

Screening in the Elinor Bunin Munroe Film Center December 21–January 3

## THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27

- 4:00** They All Come Out
- 5:30** Phantom Raiders
- 7:00** Frontier Rangers
- 8:45** Shorts Program

## FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28

- 3:30** Doctors Don't Tell
- 5:00** Great Day in the Morning
- 7:00** Nightfall + What Do You Think
- 9:00** Canyon Passage

## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29

- 1:30** Appointment in Honduras
- 3:15** Wichita
- 5:00** Circle of Danger
- 7:00** Stars in my Crown
- 9:00** Stranger on Horseback

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30

- 1:00** Timbuktu
- 3:00** The Fearmakers
- 4:45** Easy Living
- 6:30** The Giant of Marathon
- 8:15** The Leopard Man +  
The Man in the Barn

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 31

- 1:30** They All Come Out
- 3:30** The Comedy of Terrors
- 5:15** The Flame and the Arrow
- 7:15** Cat People + The Ship That Died
- 9:00** Out of the Past

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 1

- 3:00** Great Day in the Morning
- 5:00** Nightfall + What Do You Think
- 7:00** Experiment Perilous
- 9:00** Night of the Demon

## WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 2

- 3:00** War-Gods of the Deep
- 5:00** Way of a Gaucho
- 7:00** Days of Glory
- 9:00** I Walked with a Zombie +  
The King Without a Crown

## THURSDAY, JANUARY 3

- 3:15** Easy Living
- 5:00** Stars in My Crown
- 7:00** Wichita
- 8:45** The Fearmakers

## TICKETS

\$10 Members

\$12 Students, Seniors, Persons with  
Disabilities

\$15 General Public

SEE MORE AND SAVE WITH  
THE \$125 ALL-ACCESS PASS  
OR 3+ FILM PACKAGE

Easy Living

Courtesy of Warner Brothers





## NICK CARTER, MASTER DETECTIVE

**USA, 1939, 35mm, 59m**

Tourneur's first Nick Carter film for MGM is a zippy, action-packed mystery with Walter Pidgeon as the unflappable dime-novel super-sleuth, going undercover at an airplane factory to track down spies stealing aeronautical secrets. Laced with shadowy menace, this briskly entertaining programmer features impressive aerial stunts (including a tailspin edited into a startlingly experimental montage), outré antics from Donald Meek as a wannabe-criminologist beekeeper, and a bullet-riddled plane vs. boat climax—all in under an hour! Print courtesy of the British Film Institute.

*Preceded by:*

## REWARD UNLIMITED

**USA, 1944, 35mm, 11m**

Produced for the United States Public Health Service during World War II, this docu-narrative dramatizes the training and work of cadet nurses.

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**Friday, December 14 5:30pm**

**Tuesday, December 25 3:15pm**

@filmlinc



## NIGHT OF THE DEMON

**UK, 1957, 35mm, 95m**

After a late-career return to the noir cycle with *Nightfall*, Tourneur traveled overseas to direct this adaptation of “Casting the Runes,” a short story by English medievalist and legendary ghost story writer M.R. James. The film stars Dana Andrews as an American professor brought to London for a parapsychology conference. Once there, he is pulled into an investigation surrounding a satanic cultist and the diabolical force he may have conjured. Although the titular monster was allegedly inserted into the film without Tourneur's consent, *Night of the Demon* remains a heady, uncommon entry in the filmmaker's oeuvre: a slow-burning chiller, peppered with irony and sly humor, about witchcraft in contemporary England.

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**Saturday, December 15 9:15pm**

**Monday, December 24 8:30pm**

**Tuesday, January 1 9:00pm**





Courtesy of Sony Pictures

## NIGHTFALL

**USA, 1957, 35mm, 78m**

Early in Tourneur's terrifically compact adaptation of a David Goodis novel, a man and a woman (Aldo Ray and Anne Bancroft) strike up an acquaintance and have dinner together. After this, the man is suddenly hijacked and spirited away by two thugs (Brian Keith and Rudy Bond). In flashback, we learn Ray crossed paths with the men a year earlier during a camping trip, accidentally leaving a bag of \$350,000. Now they want their money back. As always, Tourneur sifts the action into the settings, in this case an L.A. beachfront and the open spaces of Wyoming.

*Preceded by:*

## WHAT DO YOU THINK? (N. 1)

**USA, 1937, 35mm, 11m**

This first episode in the shorts series about unexplained phenomena, this film attempts to understand an array of extra-sensory events happening to a screenwriter. Print courtesy of Eye Filmmuseum.

**Saturday, December 15 7:15pm**

**Friday, December 28 7:00pm**

**Tuesday, January 1 5:00pm**



Courtesy of Warner Brothers

## OUT OF THE PAST

**USA, 1947, 35mm, 97m**

Tourneur's landmark noir boasts one of Robert Mitchum's most iconic roles. He is magnetic as Jeff, the low-key proprietor of a gas station in small-town California. When some ill-intentioned characters from Jeff's shadowy past arrive on the scene looking for him, it sets off a riveting chain of events that reunites him with Kathie (Jane Greer, one of the all-time great femme fatales), the slippery girlfriend of powerful and shady Whit Sterling (Kirk Douglas). *Out of the Past* is singularly rich with twists, turns, and profound ideas concerning the complex relationship between the past, the present, and fate.

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**Saturday, December 15 5:15pm**

**Tuesday, December 25 8:30pm**

**Monday, December 31 9:00pm**

**FOR TICKETS: FILMLINC.ORG**



## PHANTOM RAIDERS

**USA, 1940, 70m**

Walter Pidgeon and Donald Meek reprise their roles as super-sleuth Nick Carter and his beekeeper sidekick Bartholomew in this glossy, comic thriller set along the Panama Canal. The second in the Nick Carter trilogy finds the duo vacationing in Central America when they're called to investigate the mysterious disappearance of British merchant vessels, a scheme headed by local gangster Al Taurez (Joseph Schildkraut). Like *Nick Carter, Master Detective*, *Phantom Raiders* is a clever, fast-paced suspense film with an exceptional brand of humor, courtesy of Meek, who stands in as a welcome lunatic foil to the suave private eye.

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**Sunday, December 23 1:30pm**

**Thursday, December 27 5:30pm**



## STARS IN MY CROWN

**USA, 1950, 35mm, 89m**

One of the unsung glories of American cinema, *Stars in My Crown* was the only project that Tourneur—a director who famously took on any assignment the studio handed him—actively pursued. His passion for the material shines through in every lovingly composed frame of this glowingly nostalgic evocation of life, death, conflict, and community in a small western town in the mid-1800s, with Joel McCrea as the preacher whose idealism puts him at odds with the forces of prejudice and hate. A celebration of egalitarianism and a full-throated rebuke of racism, this serene western marries the frontier folklore of Twain with the transcendent spirituality of Dreyer.

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**Thursday, December 20 7:00pm**

**Saturday, December 29 7:00pm**

**Thursday, January 3 5:00pm**



Photo by United Artists/Kobal/REX/Statuestock

## STRANGER ON HORSEBACK

**USA, 1955, 66m**

The first of two superb westerns Tourneur made in 1955 with Joel McCrea (followed by *Wichita*), this adaptation of a Louis L'Amour story casts the actor as a rugged circuit court judge whose determination to bring the rule of law to an untamed frontier town brings him into conflict with a powerful, proudly defiant family and their imperious, whip-cracking niece (mononymous spitfire Miroslava). Though just over an hour, *Stranger on Horseback* achieves a sublime expansiveness thanks to the painterly Ansco color cinematography and Tourneur's intelligent handling of one of his pet themes: the quest for order in an essentially chaotic world.

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**Sunday, December 23 8:30pm**

**Saturday, December 29 9:00pm**



Courtesy of Warner Brothers

## THEY ALL COME OUT

**USA, 1938, 16mm, 70m**

What began as a documentary on federal prisons became Tourneur's first Hollywood feature: a punchy, crime-doesn't-pay gangster saga shot on location in penitentiaries across the country (including Alcatraz). Anticipating his most famous role in *Detour*, Tom Neal plays a down-and-out drifter who, along with a hard-boiled moll (Rita Johnson), journeys from the depths of the criminal underworld through the "rehabilitative" American penal system. Displaying his facility for wringing maximum atmosphere from a B budget, Tourneur imbues the film with a shadow-splashed, proto-noir look and caps things off with a knockout bit of brutality involving a blowtorch. Print courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

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**Thursday, December 27 4:00pm**

**Monday, December 31 1:30pm**



Courtesy of Ciné-Classic

## TIMBUKTU

**USA, 1959, 35mm, 91m**

Tourneur's penultimate Hollywood film is a pleasurably pulpy desert adventure starring Victor Mature as an every-man-for-himself American gunrunner playing both sides in the conflict between France and rebel tribes in West Africa. Along the way there is plenty of preposterous he-man dialogue, a *Casablanca*-style romance with French commander's wife Yvonne De Carlo, and some creative, effectively skin-crawling sadism involving poison spiders. In spite of the film's camp trappings, Tourneur's distinctive touch is apparent in the arid, oddly barren visuals, lending the film a detached, otherworldly quality.

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**Friday, December 21 5:00pm**

**Sunday, December 30 1:00pm**



Courtesy of Films sans Frontières

## WAR-GODS OF THE DEEP

**UK/USA, 1965, 84m**

Tourneur's final film is a continuation of American International Pictures' hugely successful Edgar Allan Poe cycle, loosely based on a poem by the author. Vincent Price plays the diabolical overlord of a secret city beneath the sea who holds a trio of unfortunates hostage in his aquatic lair where time stands still and an underwater volcano threatens to blast them all to smithereens. Despite the comic book plot and charmingly campy rubber-suited gill-men, this imaginative, Jules Verne-esque fantasy is intriguingly Tourneurian in its evocation of a world ruled by chaos and sinister, irrational forces.

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**Wednesday, December 26 4:45pm**

**Wednesday, January 2 3:00pm**



Photo by 20th Century Fox/Kobal/REX/Shutterstock

## WAY OF A GAUCHO

**USA, 1952, 35mm, 93m**

**English with Spanish subtitles**

Gloriously shot on location in Argentina, this majestic South American Western is beautifully writ in the dusty browns, pale greens, and brilliant sky blues of the Pampas. It's there that a hot-tempered gaucho (Rory Calhoun) deserts the army and goes rogue to lead a band of cowboy outlaws in revolt against the railroad developers threatening their traditional way of life. Co-starring Gene Tierney as an aristocrat turned bandit bride, *Way of a Gaucho* is among Tourneur's most pictorially ravishing films and one of the most eloquent variations on his enduring theme of individual freedom versus the subjugating forces of civilization.

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**Saturday, December 22 5:45pm**

**Wednesday, January 2 5:00pm**



Courtesy of Warner Brothers

## WICHITA

**USA, 1955, 35mm, 81m**

This masterfully crafted Western exemplifies the formal elegance and sophisticated worldview Tourneur brought to the genre. Joel McCrea stars as legendary lawman Wyatt Earp, who reluctantly takes on the job of marshal of the wild and woolly frontier town of Wichita and proceeds to run the trigger-happy gunslingers and carousing cowboys out of town—a move that doesn't sit well with the city's fat-cat businessmen. The director's superbly composed CinemaScope frames and carefully controlled color palette lend an unassuming grace and grandeur to this subversive allegory about the clash between capitalism and moral right.

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**Sunday, December 23 6:45pm**

**Saturday, December 29 3:15pm**

**Thursday, January 3 7:00pm**

## SHORTS PROGRAM

TRT: 75m

A selection of Tourneur's earliest one-reelers—an assortment of *Pete Smith Specialties* and *John Nesbitt's Passing Parades*—produced at MGM between 1936 and 1942.

### KILLER DOG

**USA, 1936, 16mm, 10m**

A suspected killer dog is brought to trial in one of Tourneur's first *Pete Smith Specialties*. Print courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

### ROMANCE OF RADIUM

**USA, 1937, 16mm, 10m**

This Oscar-nominated short documentary looks at the accidental discovery of radium and its importance in modern medicine. Print courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

### THE GRAND BOUNCE

**USA, 1937, 16mm, 11m**

A broke gambler writes a bum check to his intimidating debt collectors (the "Or Else Boys"), and scrambles to deposit enough money before the check is cashed. Print courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

### THE FACE BEHIND THE MASK

**USA, 1938, 16mm, 11m**

Tourneur explores the popular theories surrounding one of France's greatest mysteries: the identity of a masked

prisoner jailed during the reign of King Louis XIV. Print courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

### YANKEE DOODLE GOES TO TOWN

**USA, 1939, 11m**

Made shortly before the outbreak of World War II, *Yankee Doodle Goes to Town* surveys the history of American democracy and the dangers of fascism. Courtesy of Cinémathèque de la Ville de Luxembourg

### THE INCREDIBLE STRANGER

**USA, 1942, 16mm, 11m**

In 1897, a mystery man—who communicates only via written letters—arrives in a small town, rousing many questions from the locals who are eager to learn of his past. Print courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

### THE MAGIC ALPHABET

**USA, 1942, 16mm, 11m**

Mixing documentary and dramatized scenarios, *The Magic Alphabet* looks at three ailing patients and their vitamin deficiencies. Print courtesy of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

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**Saturday, December 22 1:30pm**

**Thursday, December 27 8:45pm**



BY NICK PINKERTON

## NIGHTCRAWLER

*The films of Jacques Tourneur journey  
into dark places and soul-searching moods*

THE CINEMA OF JACQUES TOURNEUR comes back to me in pieces, dissolved but for the few bits that bob to the surface of the mind, sometimes the same ones, sometimes different. In a conversation on Tourneur's works, Pedro Costa, an admirer, once commented: "They have a strange quality of . . . films that seem to generate some kind of oblivion inside of them. You tend to forget parts." This isn't a matter of the movies themselves being forgettable, though—very far from it—or of otherwise undistinguished industrial product being redeemed by a few stray grace notes, those little stylistic touches through which the auteur of cinephile lore would mark his territory. Rather, there is something in Tourneur's films that has the quality of a familiar tune half heard from a distant room; even encountered for the first time, they have the poignancy of fogged memories. *Out of the Past* (1947) doesn't lack for plot involutions, but what lingers is the geometry of Mitchum's

face shining from the dark of a sedan parked on the shoulder of a rural route, the meeting on a Mexican beach festooned with fisherman's nets between Robert Mitchum and Jane Greer, and the intimacy and quietude of their odd banter. ("I didn't know you were so little." "I'm bigger than Napoleon.")

Tourneur, appropriately, comes down to us in fragments as well. He died in 1977, but left nothing like the stock of myth-building interviews bequeathed by, say, Howard Hawks or Jean Renoir, both of whom died at around the same time. Never in his lifetime did Tourneur attract anything like the esteem accrued by those slightly older men, but even if hordes of graduate students wielding tape recorders had descended on his retirement home in Bergerac, France, in the Périgord region where his wife had been raised, it is hard to imagine that they would have taken away much from the experience, for Tourneur was notably shy, and not much of a raconteur. He can be seen in a

French television interview, aired posthumously in 1979, a pink, jowly, rotund, content-seeming bourgeois in a black sweater, praising Walt Disney and issuing such profundities as “Cinema is an escape.” Even in his Hollywood heyday he was remembered as a modest, retiring type, an avid fisherman whose fishing buddies knew little of his career, though behind that reserve was a feeling for beauty that, at least fleetingly, got the hook into every film that he made.

Tourneur was born in France on November 12, 1904, but spent no small part of his youth in the United States. When in 1914 Jacques’s father, Maurice, a director for the Éclair production company, traveled to the U.S. to head their studio in Fort Lee, New Jersey, the family followed soon after, and in four years moved west with the developing industry, in which Tourneur père was, for a time at least, a conspicuous success, both artistically and financially. Jacques attended Hollywood High School, where he was a grade above Joel McCrea, later the lead in his *Stars in My Crown* (1950), and when his father returned to France in 1926, he stayed behind, a naturalized American citizen. After a short stint as a stock player at MGM, Jacques rejoined Maurice for a time to be his assistant director and begin his own filmmaking career, which he would parlay into work in America, and though he spent the last decade of his life in the land where they revere their aging auteurs, he was a man of both Old World and New. He spoke English, it is said, with nary a trace of an accent, and was addressed sometimes on set as “Jack Turner,” but he remained decidedly French in his gastronomy. His love for drink in excess—one of the few aspects of his personal life there is much testimony

on—is a trait, like love of liberty, that binds Franco-American friendship. His great, late film *Night of the Demon* (1957), starring his friend and fellow toper Dana Andrews, may be the finest motion picture ever made by two knee-walking drunks.

There were still some memorable moments left in him, but *Night of the Demon* was Tourneur’s last wholly satisfying film, arriving at the tail end of a catch-as-catch-can career that had produced horror movies, Westerns, thrillers, swashbucklers, one hard-to-classify picturesque rural drama (*Stars in My Crown*), and, if truth is to be told, whatever he was paid to put a hand to. That Tourneur was not known to be choosy about his material has somewhat inhibited the

case for him as an artist of the first class, at least according to the criteria of auteurdom, though there is also a chicken-and-egg question: a director who succeeds with a certain kind of material is likely to wind up handling more of the same, even if it didn’t originate with them, and this success may indicate affinity just as well as any concerted

pursuit of subjects. An artist’s work can be shaped by long-existing obsessions, but so can the discoveries made in the course of work foster new preoccupations—though listen to enough of the dialogue around directorial personalities and you may get the impression that nothing that happens in an artist’s life after the age of adolescence makes much difference and that, say, Hitchcock didn’t have a single experience that outdid the time his daddy had him thrown in the slammer while he was still in short pants.

Let us return, then, to the case of *Night of the Demon*, in which Andrews plays a skeptical American who, visiting London for a parapsychology convention, finds himself



*Night of the Demon*

Photo by Columbia/Kobal/REX/Shutterstock

trying to wrap his rational mind around the wholly unexplainable phenomenon of some cursed runes on a slip of parchment that, if lore is to be believed, may end his life if not passed along. Tourneur was brought onto the project by independent producer Hal E. Chester, but his earlier connection to Val Lewton's horror unit at RKO Studios in the early 1940s certainly would have recommended him for the gig. If Tourneur didn't have an interest in the occult and supernatural occurrences before directing *Cat People* (1942), he became a self-styled expert on these matters; by the end of his career, he was working on an unrealized movie about a wealthy American who planned to use cutting-edge technologies to search for spectral presences in a haunted house in England called *Whispering in Distant Chambers* (a spectacularly apt title for a filmmaker with a pronounced penchant for long perspective shots).

Another recurring aspect of Tourneur's cinema represented in *Night of the Demon* was the curious, sometimes clumsy communication in transatlantic relationships, internalized in the director's double identity as Jack Turner/Jacques Tourneur. Andrews's character's trip was presaged by that of Ray Milland's Yank businessman in *Circle of Danger* (1951), in which the protagonist arrives in the U.K. to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of his brother in a commando raid in Brittany at the outset of World War II. One of Tourneur's most undervalued films, *Experiment Perilous* (1944), set in New York City in the year before the director's birth, develops an almost Jamesian polarity between European suavity and decadence, represented by Paul Lukas's Austrian expat millionaire, and American

innocence, embodied, curiously enough, by the Vienna-born Hedy Lamarr. Even as sympathies are complicated, the dichotomy remains much the same in Tourneur's best-known film, *Cat People*. Made under the auspices of creative producer Lewton—the job title, in this case, actually fits—the movie follows the meet-cute and troubled marriage between Kent Smith's self-described “good plain Americano” Oliver and Simone Simon's Serbian émigré Irena, who, despite her new husband's blandishments and self-satisfied reassurances, remains quite convinced of the reality of the race of were-cats from her ancestral folklore, and the possibility that she may be one herself.

Oliver is a firm, hearty handshake in human form. He is a man who, after being denied conubial comforts at length, launches into a monologue that is almost touchingly callow and pathetic coming from a grown man: “You know, it's a funny thing, I've never been unhappy before...” He is hale

and sunny and wholly unaccustomed to Irena's natural, nocturnal habitat: “I like the dark,” she tells him as he sits in her apartment's parlor after they've passed most of a day together. “It's friendly.”



Courtesy of Warner Brothers

*This is an excerpt from a feature in the Nov-Dec issue of Film Comment. Subscribe or learn more at [filmcomment.com](http://filmcomment.com).*

*Nick Pinkerton is a regular contributor to Film Comment and a member of the New York Film Critics Circle.*

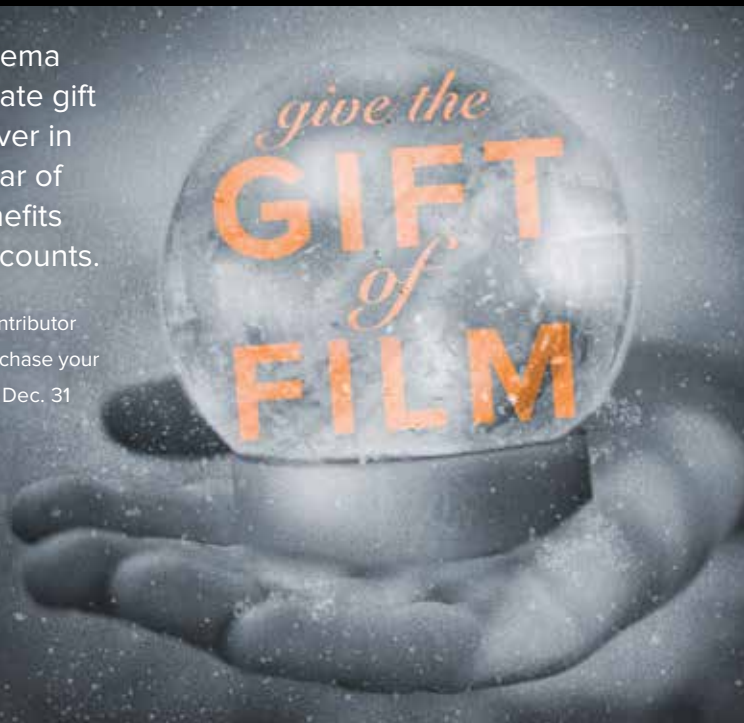


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