

CC recommends

Film in the [December 12, 2006](#) issue

Holiday

In George Cukor's 1938 adaptation of a Philip Barry comedy of manners, Cary Grant plays a young man who vaults over his working-class background to strike it rich and win the hand of an aristocrat (Doris Nolan). But he doesn't want the future her wealth-loving father has mapped out for him; he dreams of a life of adventure. Katharine Hepburn plays his fiancée's sister, who is fighting her own quiet rebellion against her family's values and sees a kindred spirit in him. Grant and Hepburn give peerless performances.

The Fallen Idol

British director Carol Reed brings Graham Greene's story about hero worship and betrayal to the screen. The protagonist is a diplomat's son (Bobby Henrey) whose closest relationship with an adult is with the embassy butler (Ralph Richardson); when the butler is implicated in murder, the boy tries to save him. The 1948 movie is a tense, unsettling thriller and a poignant coming-of-age story.

Forbidden Planet

One of the most enjoyable of the dozens of sci-fi pictures released in the 1950s. The source material is Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Walter Pidgeon plays a futuristic Prospero; he and his beautiful daughter (Anne Francis) are the only survivors of a crew sent to colonize a distant planet. Leslie Nielsen heads an exploratory mission sent from Earth to find out what happened to the others. For Prospero's loyal fairy sprite, Ariel, screenwriter Cyril Hume supplies Robby the Robot, and the half-man, half-monster Caliban surfaces as a creepy collective nemesis known as "monsters of the id."

The Conformist

Jean-Louis Trintignant plays a man driven to a life of conformity in 1930s Rome—marriage to a bourgeoisie (Stefania Sandrelli) and service to the Fascist

Party—by a need to repress his own complicated sexuality and distance himself from his crazy family. In Bernardo Bertolucci's dizzyingly sensuous 1970 film, the temptations of decadence are great, especially when they come in the form of Dominique Sanda. She plays the alluring wife of Trintignant's university mentor, an outspoken antifascist hiding in Paris whom Trintignant's bosses want to assassinate. It is one of the masterpieces of its era.

Six Moral Tales

The legendary French writer-director Eric Rohmer is the unquestioned master of the "intellectual dialogue" movie, and this package of six films, four features and two shorts, each focusing on some variation of thwarted lust and torrid temptation, shows him at his best. Based on stories that Rohmer wrote himself before turning the tales into scripts, the boxed set includes such classics as *Claire's Knee* (1970), *Chloe in the Afternoon* (1972), and best known of all, 1969's *My Night at Maud's*, which features one of the most famous extended dialogues in art film history; in it a pious young man, obsessed with Pascal, spends a long winter evening explaining to a beautiful young woman why he won't be able to sleep with her that night. The movie's final scene is one of those rare and wonderful moments when everything that is confusing in the film is cleared up with a single glance and a quick hello.

Sam Peckinpah's Legendary Western Collection

Twenty-two years after his death, director Peckinpah grows more imposing as a thematic trailblazer and stylistic visionary (his influence can be seen in two of the past year's best films, *The Proposition* and *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada*). What made Peckinpah so great, apart from his mastery of action sequences and creative editing, was his willingness to embrace large themes—from friendship and loyalty to betrayal and revenge—while keeping an eye on those damaged men who have outlived their times and are looking for an honorable way to die. The set includes his most famous film, the violent and poetic *The Wild Bunch* (1969); his least-known western, *The Ballad of Cable Hogue* (1970); his most controversial film, *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973); and his most sublime effort, 1962's *Ride the High Country*.

49 Up

The latest chapter in one of the most ambitious movie projects of all time, *49 Up* is the seventh installment in Michael Apted's study of England's education system and

how it influences students in later life, as witnessed through the eyes of a handful of boys and girls who have become wary men and women in the meantime. Every seven years since *7 Up* was released in 1964, Apted has revisited his subjects and released a new film (*14 Up*, *21 Up*, etc.) that incorporates footage from the earlier films. What began as a simple documentary has become something far more enlightening, unnerving and profound.

The Double Life of Veronique

This 1991 film by the late, great Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski is less a mystery than a spiritual quest. It presents the conundrum of two identical young women—one living in Poland, the other in France—whose connection to each other is as vague and beautiful as the film's misty cinematography. Are they identical twins? Two lives coexisting in a parallel universe? Or are they perhaps two parts of one soul that has inexplicably broken apart, searching across time and space to be reunited? Kieslowski uses chance, coincidence and an unspoken understanding of God to form meaning out of chaos.