

CC recommends

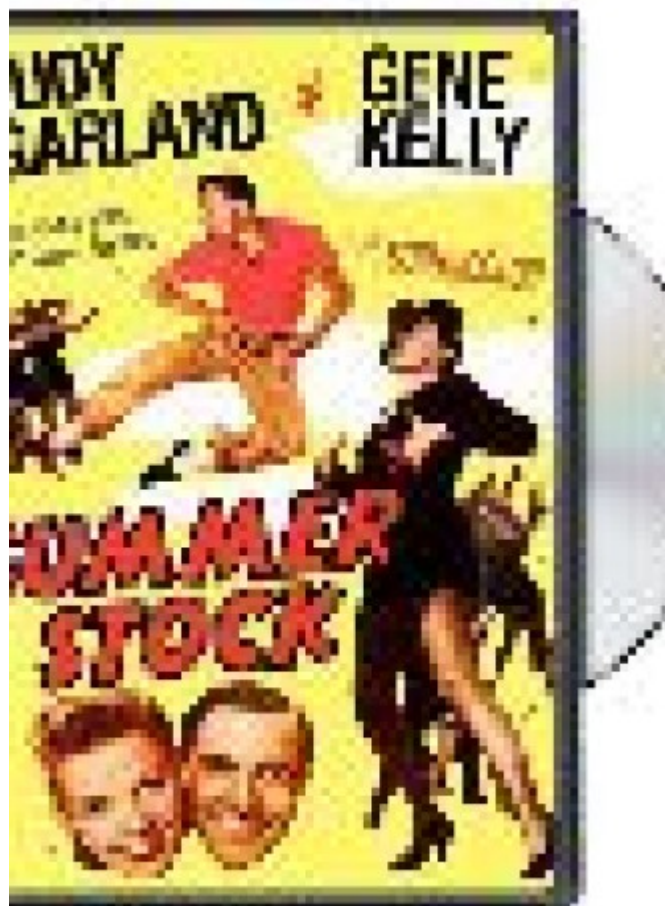
selected by [John Petrakis](#) and [Steve A. Vineberg](#)

This review appears in the [December 11, 2007](#) issue.

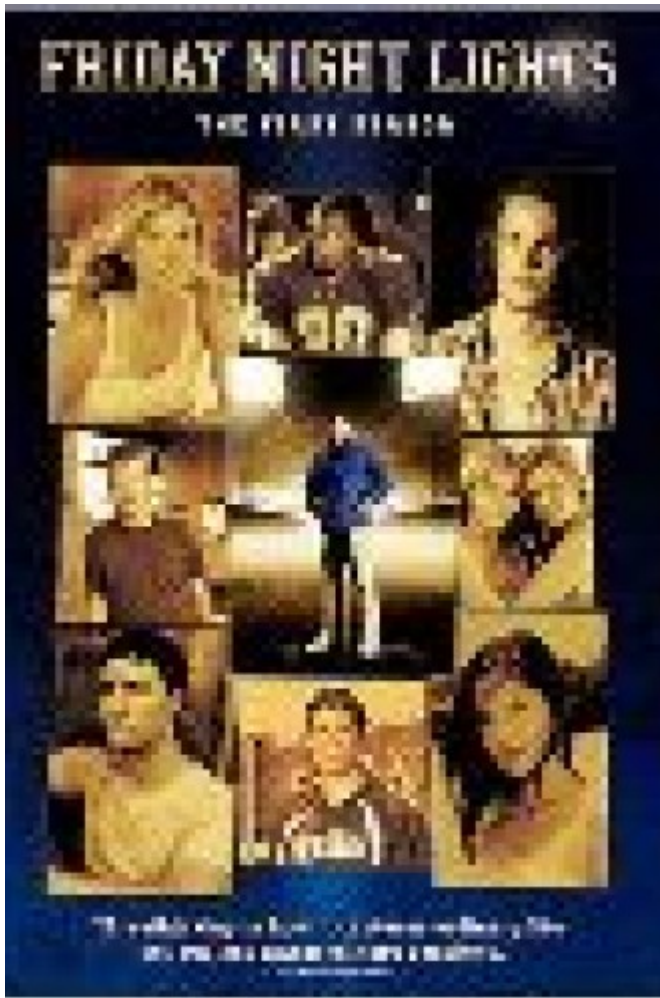
In Review



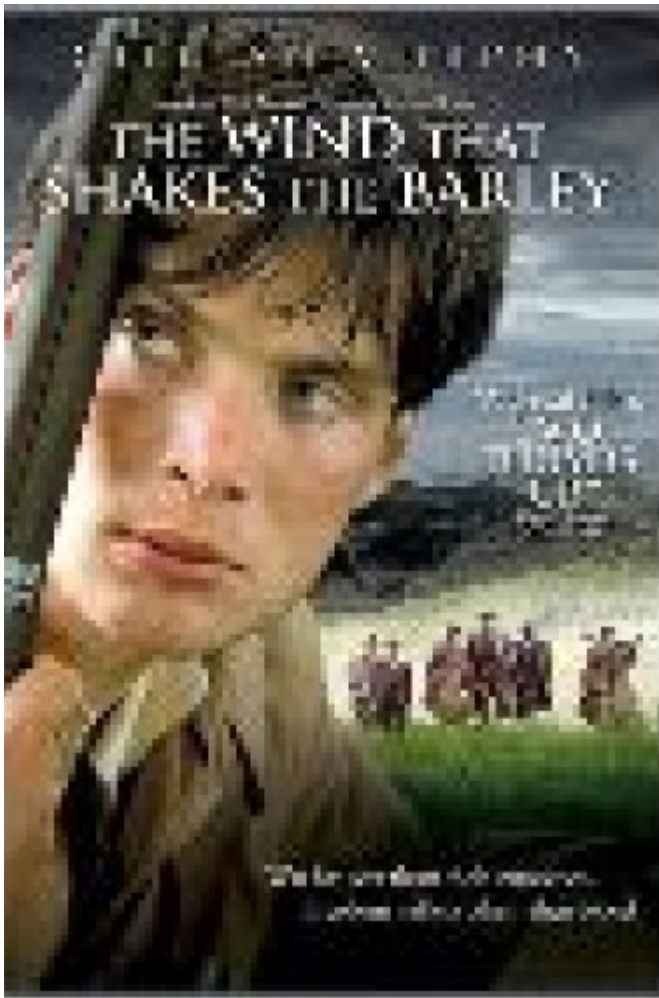
Shoot the Moon



Summer Stock



Friday Night Lights (Season 1)



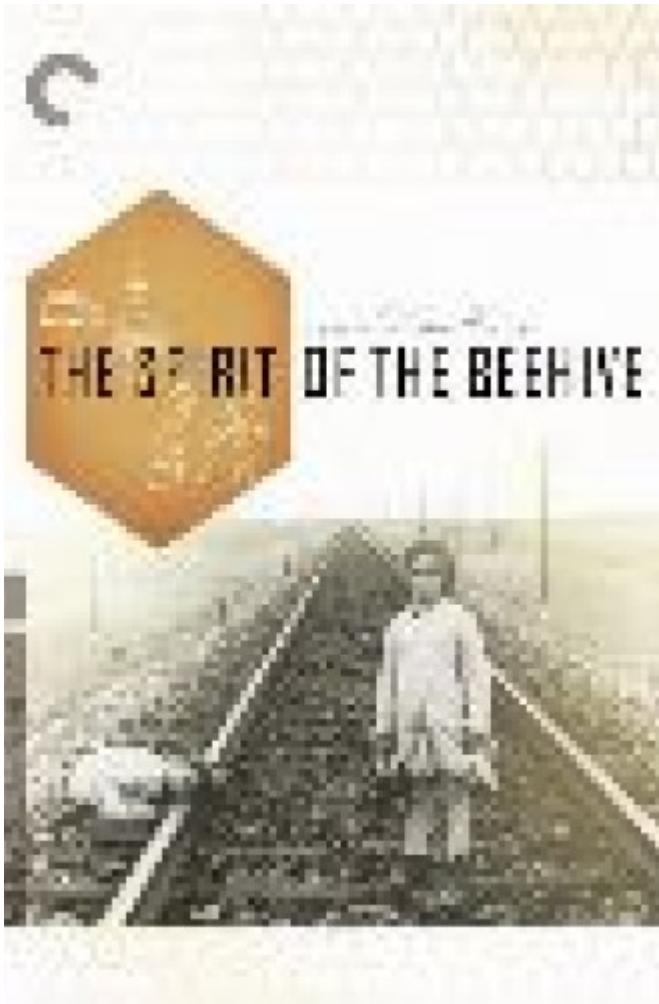
The Wind That Shakes the Barley



Away from Her



Army of Shadows



Spirit of the Beehive

This 1982 drama directed by Alan Parker is one of the great films of its decade—complex, adult, irresolvable, with a screenplay by Bo Goldman that poeticizes its characters' anguish. Many of the lines stay in your head. Albert Finney and Diane Keaton play George and Faith Dunlap, who have reached the end of their marriage but don't have any idea of how to let it go without rancor. In the middle of it all are the Dunlaps' four daughters. The three younger ones provide the film's much-needed humor; the eldest, Sherry (beautifully played by the late Dana Hill), her father's daughter in every way, can't forgive him for abandoning the family.

Perhaps the loveliest Judy Garland musical almost no one knows. She made it in 1950, at the end of her great MGM period, just before the studio finally fired her for being unreliable. It marked the second time she got to play opposite Gene Kelly, and they're sweet together as a pair of eager thespians who (of course) fall in love. The

Harry Warren–Mack Gordon songs include the duet “You Wonderful You” and the big, exuberant number “Happy Harvest,” but the most memorable tune is Harold Arlen’s “Get Happy,” which Garland executes, with supreme confidence, in shorts, top hat and an abridged tuxedo jacket.

The best show on TV last season is available in a boxed set that includes deleted scenes (some of them knockouts). Peter Berg created this drama about high school football in a sleepy Texas town that has nothing else to offer. It’s as much about living in a dead-end town as Peter Bogdanovich’s 1971 film *The Last Picture Show*, but it has a more varied tone. The series deals with the kind of topics you expect to find in a teen potboiler—one player damages his spine during a game and becomes a paraplegic; another takes steroids and encounters racism—but in ways that are always surprising and open-ended.

An emotionally wrenching study of the Irish Republican Army in 1920 that focuses on two brothers: one an idealistic medical student who abandons his studies to fight the British, the other a born revolutionary who confuses compromise with victory. British director Ken Loach peppers his film with extended arguments about the difficult decisions that must be made and never allows one side to be completely right.

Julie Christie gives a masterful performance as a thoughtful Canadian academic who realizes that she is slowly losing the battle with Alzheimer’s. The soul of the beautifully shot film, which is based on an Alice Munro short story, lies in the tricky relationship between Christie and her sometimes difficult husband (Gordon Pinsent), who must not only learn to live without his wife’s mind and memories, but must make a greater sacrifice to guarantee her new memories of her own. Olympia Dukakis is also terrific as the sarcastic, sad wife of another patient.

This stark 1969 French film, which did not play in the U.S. until 2006, marks the apex of the distinguished directing career of Jean-Pierre Melville, who died in 1973 at the age of 55. It examines the inner workings of the French Resistance against the Nazis during World War II, stripping away all of the glamour and bravado that normally accompany such stories. Melville lays out a tale which is like a chess match; questions of loyalty and courage come face-to-face with personal prejudices and emotional limitations.

Considered one of the great films of Spanish cinema, this 1973 political allegory concerns a little girl (the great child actress Ana Torrent) who is so deeply moved by

a traveling screening of the movie *Frankenstein* that she allows the soul of the “monster” to seep into the corners of her life. The story culminates in her relationship with an AWOL soldier. Directed by Victor Erice, this film is remarkable in its ability to walk the fine line between a child’s fears and her imagination. It was a major influence on the 2006 film *Pan’s Labyrinth*.

More recommendations:

[Books on theology](#)

[Books on spirituality](#)

[Memoir and biography](#)

[Fiction books](#)

[Children's literature](#)

[Classical music](#)

[Pop Christmas music](#)