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FILM REVIEW: Rear Window (Alfred Hitchcock, 1954): USA

Description



ese theater as part of the AFI film festival, *Rear Window*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, is a brilliantly filmed movie, adapted from Cornell Woolishâ??s, â??It had to be Murderâ?•, of a man, L.B. Jeffries, an injured war photographer/correspondent, played by James Stewart of *Itâ??s a Wonderful Life* (1946), who believes he has witnessed a murder in the apartment complex where he lives. Hitchcock uses this window view to film his entire story. John Michael Hayes wrote the screenplay. His other credits include *The Man who Knew too Much* (1956) and *To Catch A Thief* (1955). George Tomasini provides the editing as he also worked on other Hitchcock classic films *Psycho* (1960) and *North by Northwest* (1959). The viewer is treated to a look into all the neighboring dwellings as seen from the protagonistâ??s, L.B. Jeffriesâ?? window â?? seemingly many New York apartment dwellers partake in the alluring fascination of peeping through neighboring windows. The cinematography is credited to Robert Burks. Bruks other works include *Vertigo* (1958) and *North by Northwest* (1959). The production design was done by Sam Comer and Ray Moyer of *Sunset Blvd* (1950) and *Breakfast at Tiffanyâ??s* (1961) fame. James C. Katz is listed as producer having produced the epic *Spartacus*

(1960) and *Vertigo* (1958). Paramount Pictures with over six thousand pictures to its credit, is listed as the production company.

Hitchcock, known for powerhouse suspense films like *Psycho* (1960), *Birds* (1963) and *North by Northwest* (1959), shows cooped up newlyweds, a buxom young skimpily-clad, shapely exercise-crazed maiden, a lonely, love sick lady, a socially-inclined, romantic-minded musician and a seemingly ordinary housewife married to a seemingly normal traveling salesman, whom Stewartâ??s character, Jeffries, claims has murdered the wife. Jeffries doesnâ??t actually see the murder. Nevertheless, he is convinced the salesman murdered his wife after witnessing several highly acute, suspicious events . Stewartâ??s facial expressions and what appear to be exaggerated eye movements key the viewer in on action as Stewart plays the role of Jeffries, a wounded war hero who confined to a wheelchair and who passes the time by peering out his rear window at the neighbors as they go about their everyday lives. Jeffries also uses his camera with a telescopic lens to provide up-close detail of his subjects and he frantically uses exploding flashbulbs as he attempts to thwart the murdering salesmanâ??s efforts to silence Jeffries.

Hitchcock introduces and develops several strong and powerful characters, most notably in the form of Grace Kelly, later known as the Princess Consort of Monaco, as Jeffries love interest. Kellyâ??s striking good lucks coupled with her patient, unrequited love for Jeffries provide the viewer a glimpse into Hitchcockâ??s portrayal of a 1950â??s socialite. She credibly plays the role of murder investigator with a refreshing vim and vigor. In addition, Wendell Corey plays a rather uninteresting yet wary detective who also happened to be a war buddy of Jeffries. Thelma Ritter plays Stella, Jeffriesâ?? physical therapist, who drops by for daily therapy and, at times colorful banter. And, Raymond Burr plays the antagonist, a wife-murdering, traveling salesman who dwells across from the rear window. *Rear Window* is splendid film, an Academy Award Runner-up for Best Picture to the American drama film, *On the Waterfront* (1954), about longshoreman corruption and mob violence starring Marlon Brando, I recommend wholeheartedly.

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