

**NATIONAL  
FILM  
THEATRE**

*Programme*

**6d.**

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

presents

Bread and Butter: Part three

THE SECOND SEX

August 29th - October 15th, 1961

A STAR IS BORN

(1954)

National Film Theatre





"With A Star is Born Hollywood seems more itself than it has for a long, long time.

"It begins with a Hollywood occasion. How the boulevard glitters and seethes! Palaces loom, cars shriek, waving mobs press forward, and out steps --who? The new queen to be miked up the aisle. Smiling, she radiates her gown, speaks her few magic words, is swept on to high thrones of glamour. A curtain has gone up, and on the stage--dancing a drunken way through chorus girls and stage hands, horses and managers--has burst the Star in Decline (James Mason). The early morning sees him wandering, sober, through empty bars and dead jungle haunts, till in some retreat with the chairs piled up he finds a band session going on and the person and voice that have caught at him out of debauch--the Star in the Ascendant (Judy Garland)... This penetration in depth of the New Babylon, or Old Boloney, has been so accomplished--with such press flashes and screen width brilliantly employed--as to make the entry of Moulin Rouge seem tame.

"And as it has started, so it goes on. There is just enough satire to resist the dreadful claims of fable; song--to the accompaniment of falling Masonry--keeps sensation going. Miss Judy Garland is a world in herself. A new world: sometimes she seems almost a humped old-timer, till her eyes light up and the hard voice and mouth melt; then a devil gets into her, she sheds feminine attire and in black tights and a kind of brief kimono she'll become all eyes, action, and appeal.

"Her songs are superb, and especially that one which relates how she was born in a trunk in the Princes Theatre; every verse or phase of a show-girl's career is enacted in this film within a film, which goes on and on exploiting a dream-technique--and what does it matter that the whole thing's supposed to be a first try-out in a movie house? It could go on forever in the splendid knowledge that it's got something: something as good as Astaire or Kelly at his best. Miss Garland really is one of those feminine wonders that script-writers are always trying to conjure up out of the relentless tedium of Hollywood's self-intoxication.

"The film has got something, too, if not quite as much as Miss Garland. Directed by George Cukor, it matches vivacity of colour with movements as vivacious, and--for, I think, the first time--the wide screen seems not a foot too wide. The scene when Miss Garland is pin-pointed distantly beyond an auditorium while to the right every word and action are enlarged on a big television screen, is only one example of this new awareness. The earlier stages of



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A Star is Born-- which, despite cuts, lasts two and a half hours-- are decidedly sardonic; and even when the sentimentality of star love comes into its own, with Garland up, and Mason down, the spell-binding still works. At the end he asks her for a heart-broken little song, and swims out into the sunset; and there's a weird satisfaction in that. One can't imagine Mason's romantic bitterness better seized. One can't imagine the new Judy Garland at all without seeing her."

(Review by William Whitebait, New Statesman,  
12th March, 1955)



FILMS OF GEORGE CUKOR

- 1930 GRUMPY (with Cyril Gardner)  
THE VIRTUOUS SIN (with Louis Gasnier)  
THE ROYAL FAMILY OF BROADWAY (with Cyril Gardner)
- 1931 TARNISHED LADY  
GIRLS ABOUT TOWN
- 1932 WHAT PRICE HOLLYWOOD?  
A BILL OF DIVORCEMENT  
ROCKABIE
- 1933 DINNER AT EIGHT  
LITTLE WOMEN
- 1934 DAVID COPPERFIELD
- 1935 SYLVIA SCARLETT
- 1936 ROMEO AND JULIET  
CAMILLE
- 1938 HOLIDAY  
ZAZA
- 1939 THE WOMEN
- 1940 SUSAN AND GOD  
THE PHILADELPHIA STORY
- 1942 TWC-FACED WOMAN  
A WOMAN'S FACE  
HER CARDBOARD LOVER
- 1943 KEEPER OF THE FLAME

contd.-

Films of George Cukor (contd.)

- 1944 GASLIGHT  
WINGED VICTORY
- 1947 A DOUBLE LIFE  
DESIRE ME
- 1948 EDWARD, MY SON
- 1949 ADAM'S RIB
- 1950 A LIFE OF HER OWN  
BORN YESTERDAY
- 1951 THE MODEL AND THE MARRIAGE BROKER
- 1952 THE MARRYING KIND  
PAT AND MIKE
- 1953 THE ACTRESS
- 1954 IT SHOULD HAPPEN TO YOU  
A STAR IS BORN
- 1956 BHOWANI JUNCTION
- 1957 LES GIRLS  
WILD IS THE WIND
- 1960 HELLER IN PINK TIGHTS  
SONG WITHOUT END (although credited to the late  
Charles Vidor, directed for the most part by  
Cukor)
- LET'S MAKE LOVE
- 1961 LADY L (to be released)

The credits and filmography information in this programme  
was supplied by Kieran Hickey and David Thomson.