



Tuesday 29 October at 6:30 pm

Viva Maria!

France, 1965

AFS thanks Barringtons Fine Food

Director: Louis Malle
 Producer: Óscar Dancigers
 Production co: NEF, Les Productions Artistes Associés, Vides-Film
 Screenplay: Louis Malle, Jean-Claude Carrière
 Photography: Henri Decaë
 Editors: Suzanne Baron, Kénout Peltier
 Music: Georges Delerue

With: Brigitte Bardot (Maria I), Jeanne Moreau (Maria II), George Hamilton (Flores), Claudio Brook (the Great Rodolfo), Gregor Von Rezzori (Diogène), Carlos López Moctezuma (Rodríguez)

122 mins, HD (1,85:1). PG

When was the last time you saw a movie that had star power, high energy, pro-revolutionary and anticlerical sentiments, a burlesque sense of sexuality, splendid locations, comic action, and a happy ending? If the answer is never, then you really owe it to yourself to see *Viva Maria!*, a 1965 romp made by Louis Malle at his most playful. The two Marias of the title are a French-Irish explosives expert (Brigitte Bardot) who hooks up with an all-French showgirl (Jeanne Moreau) in turn of 20th-century Central America. These mismatched chorines quickly concoct a sexy act that makes them the toast of banana republics everywhere. In San Miguel, however, the most unjust of these semifederal states, the repression that they see all around drives these cheesecake queens into the arms of the local revolutionaries, and they are soon at war with the landlords, oligarchs, generals, and reactionary priests who have long made peasant life a living hell. – Mark Harris, *straight.com*

Picture this: Jeanne Moreau and Brigitte Bardot as pistol-packing showgirls who invent the striptease and get embroiled in a South American revolution. That's the irresistible concept behind *Viva Maria!*, Louis Malle's lush musical parody of a Hollywood action film. ... *Viva Maria!* is a lark, a colorful, high-spirited entertainment which, if nothing else, is worth seeing just for Henri Decaë's dazzling widescreen cinematography and the sultry performances of Moreau and Bardot; the former soft-spoken and elegant, the latter a voluptuous firebrand. In fact, Bardot almost steals the film from her co-star and led critic Pauline Kael to remark that the international sex symbol "has never been more enchanting".

It was Malle's idea to take a buddy movie and subvert it. By replacing the traditional male protagonists with two strong females, *Viva Maria!* not only worked as an amusing gender twist on a popular formula but was seen in some quarters as a political statement. Malle said German filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder later told him that *Viva Maria!* fascinated him and his fellow students at Berlin University. Malle recalled, "It was a time of those radical student movements, and they saw in the heroines the two different approaches to revolution. Bardot is action – 'Let's do it,' armed struggle, terrorism. The other one, Moreau, tries to achieve her goals legally, to change society without violence. This was, of course, way beyond my expectations of how it would be perceived."

One person who saw the dangerous implications of the film, which ends with a South American government being overthrown and the Catholic Church losing its powerful control over the populace, was J Edgar Hoover. The FBI director had been outraged by Bardot's unashamed display of her body in *And God Created Woman* (1956), and when the actress toured the US in support of *Viva Maria!*, he had his agents follow her every movement while compiling a dossier on her. In his view, she was a sexual subversive and a threat to society. Or maybe he was just jealous of her wardrobe. – Jeff Stafford, *Turner Classic Movies*



Monday 04 November at 6:30 pm

Trouble in Paradise

USA, 1932

Director/Producer: Ernst Lubitsch
 Production co: Paramount Pictures
 Screenplay: Samson Raphaelson, Grover Jones. Based on the play *The Honest Finder* by Laszlo Aladar
 Photography: Victor Milner
 Music: W Frank Harling

With: Miriam Hopkins (Lily), Kay Francis (Madame Mariette Colet), Herbert Marshall (Gaston Monescu), Charlie Ruggles (the Major), Edward Everett Horton (François Filiba), C Aubrey Smith (Adolph J Giron), Robert Greig (Jacques, Mariette's butler), Leonid Kinskey (the Communist), George Humbert (waiter)

83 mins, DV (1,37:1), black and white. PG

There is no Hollywood movie more insouciantly amoral than Ernst Lubitsch's 1932 *Trouble in Paradise*. Released in the depths of the Great Depression, Lubitsch's urbane comedy concerns a swank pair of thieves, played by Herbert Marshall and Miriam Hopkins, who not only live together in sin but – after successfully fleeing Kay Francis's rich and equally charming widow – taxi off into the sunset utterly unrepentant.

The movie's white-on-white deco sets were once the essence of modernity – and so was its worldly attitude. ... Hedonism was never more nonchalant. *Trouble in Paradise* has none of the single-entendre tawdriness or salacious Puritanism that gives pre-Code Hollywood its carnival flavor. Style is substance in Lubitsch's instantly recognized masterpiece: "As close to perfection as anything I have ever seen in the movies," the young Dwight Macdonald wrote in a little literary magazine. Indeed, style is morality.

Trouble in Paradise, adroitly adapted by Samson Raphaelson from a Hungarian play inspired by a turn-of-the-century jewel thief, is graced with a shimmering cast, impeccably streamlined in evening clothes and impossibly clinging gowns. Hopkins's self-amused coquettishness embodies the film's sense of mischief even as the superbly slouching Francis provides a sheen of lazy sensuality. Francis has the bewitching bedroom eyes, but the sly, effervescent Hopkins is the scene stealer; she must literally sit on her hands at one point to keep from swiping Francis's jewelry. ...

At the apex of the triangle, the stiff yet soigné Marshall, often positioned in the frame to show off his profile (or conceal his prosthetic leg), leans forward to inhale his irresistible co-stars, both of whom are experts at swooning on divans. – J Hoberman, *Village Voice*

What is the famed "Ernst Lubitsch touch"? One answer comes from the opening shot to his breathlessly charming and sophisticated 1932 romantic comedy *Trouble in Paradise*, a sterling precursor to the screwball classics that would arrive later in the decade. Instead of establishing Venice with the usual wide shot of the Canal Grande, Lubitsch opens at night with a garbageman picking up the trash in front of an ordinary doorway, then dumping it into a gondola and cheerfully belting out a stanza from an Italian opera. The scene is pure Lubitsch: unexpected, elegant, cinematic, and subtly pointed, a gentle class reminder before the film heads up to the royally appointed suites of high society. At 83 minutes, *Trouble In Paradise* is a model of tight, graceful construction and maximum pith, flowing from one hilarious comic setpiece to the next ... Lubitsch's cool precision befits his three romantic leads; each member of the trio cares about style above all, and each acts like he or she is the cleverest person in the room with good reason. – Scott Tobias, *AV Club*