



Monday 14 March at 6:30 pm

## The Palm Beach Story

USA 1942

Director/Screenplay: Preston Sturges  
Production co: Paramount Pictures  
Photography: Victor Milner  
Editor: Stuart Gilmore  
Music: Victor Young

With: Claudette Colbert (Gerry Jeffers), Joel McCrea (Tom Jeffers), Mary Astor (the Princess Centimillia), Rudy Vallee (JD Hackensacker III), Robert Warwick (Mr Hinch), Jimmy Conlin (Mr Asweld), William Demarest (first member, Ale and Quail Club), Franklin Pangborn (manager), Arthur Hoyt (Pullman conductor), Alan Bridge (conductor)

88 mins, Blu-ray, B&W. G

88 minutes of a woman making it in a man's world with nothing but her wits and a pair of fabulously long legs to carry her through.

The first time I saw this Preston Sturges comedy was the night I rented it and brought it over to the apartment of a longtime pal who was in the dumps, I forget why. Probably a woman. He was as low as I had ever seen him. Usually he's making wisecracks all over the place; that night it was like dinner with Boris Karloff in *The Mummy*. We popped in the tape. Here's a tip: Do not try to understand what is going on during the credit sequence. Think of it as the screwball equivalent of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, or *The Sound and the Fury*. You don't understand the openings of those novels until you have read to the end, and you won't understand the opening of *Palm Beach Story* until the final five minutes.

So we're watching the movie, and after the credits the plot is clear enough. Tom and Gerry Jeffers (Joel McCrea and Claudette Colbert) have been married for five years, and their finances are a catastrophe. They owe an ungodly amount of back rent and Tom needs money to finance his airplane-landing device that will revolutionize aviation. They are still in love, but Gerry has decided to parlay her slinky allure into some cash that will bail them both out. She charms an elderly wiener magnate ("Lay off 'em. You'll live longer") into giving her rent money and decamps to Florida for a quickie divorce. On the train to Palm Beach she hooks up with the millionaire members of the Ale and Quail Club, but after the club decides a railcar is the perfect place for target practice, Gerry meets a saner millionaire prospect, John D Hackensacker III (Rudy Vallee). They arrive at Palm Beach, take the yacht out for a spin and Hackensacker falls for Gerry. Tom arrives, itching to get Gerry back, and finds himself being pursued by Hackensacker's sister (Mary Astor). All these loose ends are tied up in a neat knot that finally explains just what was up during that credit sequence.

So, anyway, sometime around when the Wienie King arrived and gave Claudette Colbert \$700 to pay her rent, my friend sat up a little straighter and said, "Hey. She's cute." About two minutes more passed, and he added, "Really cute." When the movie ended, Boris Karloff hit rewind, slapped me on the back and declared he was buying us both a drink.

According to the book *Hollywood Goes to War*, the Office of War Information was irked by the nonessential travel in *Palm Beach Story*. That, plus the pleasure cruise on a 300-foot yacht, the "destruction of a war essential" (that railcar), and concern that the relaxed attitude toward marriage vows might strike viewers abroad as typical American morals. After this movie's release, OWI started pressing for a tighter, more patriotic wartime censorship code. They should have given Preston Sturges a medal instead. – Farran Smith Nehme, *The Self-Styled Siren*



Monday 21 March at 6:00 pm

Early start: long run time

## Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me

France/USA 1992

AFS thanks 95bFM

Director: David Lynch  
Producers: Gregg Fienberg, John Wentworth, Johanna Ray, Tim Harbert  
Production co: CIBY Pictures, Twin Peaks Productions  
Screenplay: David Lynch, Robert Engels  
Photography: Ron Garcia  
Editor: Mary Sweeney  
Music: Angelo Badalamenti

With: Sheryl Lee (Laura Palmer), Ray Wise (Leland Palmer), Mädchen Amick (Shelly Johnson), Dana Ashbrook (Bobby Briggs), Phoebe Augustine (Ronette Pulaski), David Bowie (Phillip Jeffries), Eric Dare (Leo Johnson), Miguel Ferrer (Albert Rosenfield)

135 mins, Blu-ray. R16

Nothing has ever scared me more than *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*. The psychological horror, the pervasive dread, the descent into darkness far beyond the confines of the series – it's David Lynch's most potent nightmare, and it has inspired many of my own. – Sarah Ward, *Artshub*

This undervalued, hallucinogenic gem should be approached as a collection of suffocated battle cries before Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) enters rapturously (and iconically) into the realm of the dead. The film's deliberately color-coded dream world evokes a purgatory consumed by the sadness of blues and the terrifying allure of reds. The film serves as a haunting preamble to Palmer's infamous demise, a backward-closure of sorts for fans of Lynch's cult television series. Ed Gonzalez, *Slant Magazine*

A wrap-up movie directed by series creator David Lynch should have been the perfect antidote to the frustrating end of *Twin Peaks*, especially without the interference of network execs at ABC. Instead, *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me* was booed at Cannes and met with near-universal derision from critics and fans alike. Viewed with some distance from *Twin Peaks* proper and taken on its own terms, however, the movie is... still a bit of a mess, but a riveting one.

It helps to view *Fire Walk With Me* as an especially dark David Lynch feature rather than a long episode of *Twin Peaks*. The film abounds with classic Lynch tropes: delightfully awkward dialogue; dark, surreal dreams; and copious, existence-numbing drug use. To be fair, there are quite a few reasons fans of *Twin Peaks* might be disappointed. The show's protagonist, Special Agent Dale Cooper (regular Lynch collaborator Kyle MacLachlan), barely shows up. Some beloved characters don't appear, and one major role (Donna Hayward) has been recast. But many of the one-off performances are worth watching just for their oddness, especially David Bowie's cameo as a long-missing FBI agent...

The most expanded character, and the best part of *Fire Walk With Me*, is Sheryl Lee's Laura Palmer. Though she was also cast as Laura's identical cousin Maddy, Lee never really got the chance to play Laura alive on the series; her homecoming queen/investigative MacGuffin was mostly just a symbol. But the actress's effortless shifts between Laura's devil-may-care, sex-symbol façade and her depressed, tortured inner self elevate the film, and give the series higher emotional stakes in hindsight... *Fire Walk With Me*... [is] primarily a meditation on the last week of Laura's life. Given her killer's identity, that focus means the film is also a meditation on another, more intimate crime, and the psychological toll it takes. Considering the subject matter, *Fire Walk With Me* is guaranteed to alienate at least a few fans of a series that earned a now-unthinkable 16.2 Nielsen rating. But it's also a characteristically Lynchian look at Laura's sad, mesmerizing breakdown. – Eric Thurm, *AV Club*