



Monday 21 May at 6:30 pm

## Things to Come

UK 1936

Director: William Cameron Menzies  
 Producer: Alexander Korda  
 Production co: London Films  
 Screenplay: HG Wells. Based on his novel  
 Photography: Georges Perinal  
 Editors: Charles Crichton, Francis Lyon  
 Music: Arthur Bliss

With: Raymond Massey (John Cabal/Oswald Cabal), Edward Chapman (Pippa Passworthy/Raymond Passworthy), Ralph Richardson (the Boss), Margueretta Scott (Roxana/Rowena), Cedric Hardwicke (Theotocopolos), Maurice Braddell (Dr Harding), Sophie Stewart (Mrs Cabal), Derrick de Marney (Richard Gordon), Ann Todd (Mary Gordon)

100 mins, Blu-ray, B&W. PG

From first to last, *Things to Come* was intended to bear the unmistakable stamp of HG Wells's personal vision. Adapted by the legendary science-fiction novelist from his nonfiction book of "future history," both book and film are earnest attempts to foretell the future, extrapolating from current conditions in the 1930s the course of human events over a 100-year period. Divided roughly into movements, and thus analogous to a piece of music, *Things to Come* opens, prophetically enough, with the declaration of war in 1940, a prolonged war of attrition which the film envisions will last for decades. Later, following the outbreak of an epidemic known as the Wandering Sickness, society devolves into a new Dark Ages, in which the ragtag remnants of the old order fall under the sway of vicious warlords. In the final movement, a new utopian order arises, a strangely hieratic hybrid of socialist technocracy and benevolent despotism. In order to buttress his narrative through line, Wells employs the same stock types again and again, sometimes played by the same actors: Raymond Massey turns up on three separate occasions as stentorian superman John Cabal and his descendant Oswald, while Edward Chapman plays two versions of an accommodating every-schlub. – Budd Wilkins, *Slant Magazine*

The film's memorable quality stems most obviously from a visual design that remains mesmerising and, at times, overwhelming. Drawing freely, as needed, on the stylistic devices of Soviet and German filmmaking, and using every sort of trickery, from models to photographic enlargements to deftly interpolated stock footage, Menzies and his colleagues created a series of indelible scenes: urban mobilisation followed by panic and mass death; postwar tribalism springing up among the ruins of the city; the unforgettable landing of a helmeted Massey incarnating the Man from the Future; the fleet of futuristic airplanes breaking through the clouds; the long, nearly abstract interlude of industrial reconstruction; and, finally, the gleaming subterranean pathways, soaring bridges, and gigantic television screens of the achieved World State. The effect of all these scenes is amplified immeasurably by the imposing sonorities of Arthur Bliss's score.

*Things to Come* remains HG Wells's movie, an almost unique instance in which a literary figure devoted to visionary and polemical ideas was provided with all the technical support of commercial cinema to get his message directly to the public. To the extent that the film fails to fully convey Wells's vision, it is a judgment on that vision itself. Similarly, if Menzies can be faulted for the rather wooden pacing of some of the dialogue, it is only because he could not find a way to breathe life into language that is often flatly declamatory. By the same token, it is impossible to separate the film's expressive visual and musical power from the intensity of what Wells intended to accomplish. – Geoffrey O'Brien, *Criterion.com*



Monday 28 May at 6:30 pm

## Fireworks Wednesday

Iran 2006

Director/Screenplay: Asghar Farhadi  
 Producer: Seyed Jamal Sadatian  
 Production co: Boshra Film  
 Screenplay: Asghar Farhadi, Mani Haghighi  
 Photography: Hossein Jafarian  
 Editor: Hayedeh Safyari  
 Music: Peyman Yazdani

With: Hadieh Tehrani (Mozhde), Taraneh Alidoosti (Rouhi), Hamid Farrokhezad (Morteza), Pantea Bahram (Mrs Simi)

102 mins, DCP. M violence, offensive language  
 In Farsi with English subtitles

This is a thoroughly engrossing and densely textured drama, showing Farhadi's cool skill in dissecting the Iranian middle classes and the unhappiness of marriage... Mozhde is obsessed with the idea that Morteza is cheating on her with the next-door neighbour, beauty-salon owner Simin: she listens at the ventilation duct in her bathroom and at the wall behind the closet, and it is enigmatically unclear if she has actually heard anything incriminating or not... Instantly, instinctively, she has entered the world of little secrets and lies that comes with the territory of marriage, and her open, beautiful face becomes clouded with fear and unease as she guesses what might be in store for her in the married future. – Peter Bradshaw, *The Guardian*

Few filmmakers working today can turn the psychological screws as expertly as Asghar Farhadi, the Iranian director who won an Academy Award a few years ago for the taut divorce drama *A Separation*. Once again, Farhadi's territory is the marital battlefield: this time a chaotic, psychically charred landscape inside a prosperous couple's apartment in Tehran. That's where house cleaner Roohi (Taraneh Alidoosti) arrives during the new year's celebration known in Iran as Fireworks Wednesday, when indiscriminate bursts of noise can be heard emanating all day and night from guns, firecrackers and other devices. But no explosion outside comes close to the incendiary emotions crackling between the couple Roohi has signed on to work for. As they prepare to depart for a family vacation in Dubai the next day, the wife (Hediye Tehrani) nurses a white-hot paranoia having to do with her husband (Hamid Farokhezad) and the goings-on in their busy, boisterous apartment building.

*Fireworks Wednesday* was made more than a decade ago, earning plaudits on the festival circuit but never opening in theaters. On the strength of Farhadi's recent work, it's thankfully seeing the light of day, and for the director's cadre of fans, it will prove just as satisfying – and unsettling – as the movies that have made him a household name (at least in some households). Recalling Hitchcock in his graceful, quietly observant camera work and his uncanny ability to evoke tension within disquieting crescendos and soothing lulls, Farhadi is in full command of his powers throughout... Despite a few jagged, startling edits, its keyed-up portrayal of domestic disturbance fully anticipates the agitated chamber pieces the filmmaker would become famous for.

*Fireworks Wednesday* benefits enormously from its stellar cast, especially Alidoosti, who played the mysterious title character in Farhadi's 2009 drama *About Elly*. Here, she plays an innocent girl, on the cusp of getting married herself, whose dawning realization about the strains and mistrust of conjugal life plays out across her face like the spectacle the movie is named for. Mournful, enigmatic and compulsively engrossing, *Fireworks Wednesday* gives viewers a chance to watch a master at work. – Ann Hornaday, *Washington Post*