



**Katherine  
Hepburn  
Season**

Eden Court Cinema  
Aug 30<sup>th</sup> 2016 at  
7.15pm

## The Philadelphia Story

USA 19 40 Comedy / Farce / Romance B&W 112mins  
Director: George Cukor; Producer: Joseph L. Mankiewicz;  
Starring: Katherine Hepburn, Cary Grant, James Stewart, Ruth Hussey;  
Music by: Franz Waxman; Cinematography: Joseph Ruttenberg.

Superlative of its kind, sophisticated in the best sense, with continuously witty dialogue which lays bare a deep knowledge of human nature, remarkably fine acting and first-class direction." *Monthly Film Bulletin, 1941*

Film Notes  
compiled by Ann  
& Neil MacInnes.

The Philadelphia Story was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry in 1995.

## From the reviews:

1. The film is about a socialite whose wedding plans are complicated by the simultaneous arrival of her ex-husband and a tabloid magazine journalist....It is considered one of the best examples of a comedy of remarriage, a genre popular in the 1930s and 1940s, in which a couple divorce, flirt with outsiders and then remarry – a useful story-telling ploy at a time when the depiction of extramarital affairs was blocked by the Production Code.

The film was Hepburn's first big hit following several flops, which had led to her being included on a 1938 list that Manhattan movie theater owner Harry Brandt compiled of actors considered to be "box office poison." She acquired the film rights to the play, which she had also starred in, with the help of Howard Hughes, in order to control it as a vehicle for her screen comeback. According to a Turner Broadcasting documentary MGM: 'When the Lion Roars', after MGM purchased the film rights they were skeptical about Hepburn's box office appeal, so Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's Louis B. Mayer took an unusual precaution by casting two A-list male stars (Grant and Stewart) to support Miss Hepburn.

Nominated for six Academy Awards, the film won two; James Stewart for

Best Actor and Donald Ogden Stewart for Best Adapted Screenplay. It was remade in 1956 as a musical, retitled *High Society*. *Wikipedia*

2. The famous comedic opening scene - or prologue - is a marvellous, expressive one that plays without dialogue at all. It immediately cues the audience into the personalities, interactions, and relationships of the main characters.

The wisecracking screen partnership between Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn reached its peak in this adaptation of Philip Barry's high-society stage comedy. *Tim Dirks, AMC*

3. The Philadelphia Story is an intelligent, sophisticated, classic romantic comedy-farce (part screwball) of love and marriage, human growth and class distinctions. Its screenplay is a witty, sparkling, and bright adaptation of Philip Barry's Broadway hit play. [Barry's inspiration for the lead female character was derived from real-life Philadelphian WASP heiress Hope Montgomery Scott (1905-1995).] Barry, who is uncredited as the screenwriter in the film, wrote the part specifically for the talents of Katharine Hepburn who played the hit role in the theatre. ....

After several commercial failures and labelled "box office poison" in 1938 by Photoplay Magazine, Hepburn struck out on her own by bringing the property to MGM after buying the film rights to the play. With producer Joseph L. Mankiewicz (for MGM), she was able to handpick the cast's co-stars (James Stewart and Cary Grant), screenwriter (Donald Ogden Stewart, who later won the Academy Award), and director (George Cukor). Cukor had already made four films with Hepburn:

A Bill of Divorcement (1932),  
Hepburn's first film  
Little Women (1933)  
Sylvia Scarlett (1936)  
Holiday (1938)

Hepburn's astute strategy revived her failing popularity and film career in the role of an arrogant heiress (the public's perception of her at the time) who is humbled, and the film became a major box-office success.

Promotional posters advertised the 'battle of the sexes' film as:  
"Broadway's Howling Year-Long  
Comedy Hit of the Snooty Society  
Beauty Who Slipped and Fell - IN  
LOVE."

[MGM's High Society (1956) was a softer musical re-make of the film, with a Cole Porter musical score, a much inferior product starring Bing Crosby as Dexter, Frank Sinatra as

Mike, and Grace Kelly in her last film as Tracy.]

The film earned six major Academy Award nominations including Best Director, Best Picture, Best Actor, Best Actress and Supporting Actress, and Best Adapted Screenplay. Jimmy Stewart won the Academy Award for Best Actor (his sole career Best Actor Oscar) for his role as Macauley Connor - a tabloid reporter for 'Spy' Magazine. [It was thought to be a consolation prize for his loss a year earlier for his performance in Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939). Stewart's win deprived Henry Fonda a much-deserved Best Actor Award for his work in The Grapes of Wrath (1940).] Hepburn lost the Best Actress Award to Ginger Rogers for her work in Kitty Foyle.

Typical of screwball comedies with an irreverent style and tone, the film emphasizes how the rich upper class have become blinded to the simple joys of life, during a time of upheaval and messy romances surrounding an impending marriage. The theme of the film was expressed by witty journalist James Stewart's sarcastic comment about the caustic allure of the rich: "The prettiest sight in this fine, pretty world is the privileged class enjoying its privileges." The main romantic leads in the film, Hepburn and Grant, who had been successfully

paired together in three previous films, Cukor's *Sylvia Scarlett* (1936) and *Holiday* (1938), and in Howard Hawks' *Bringing Up Baby* (1938), are pitted against each other and court each other in unlikely and tense situations. Film audiences expected to see the two brought together and reconciled - eventually - in the resolution of the conflict.

The setting of the film is among the privileged upper class society in Philadelphia. Hepburn's character, a self-willed young aristocratic heiress (nicknamed 'Red' by her ex-husband), is on the verge of a second marriage. The Philadelphia socialite has divorced her dashing, colorful, pompous, playboyish husband (Cary Grant) and become involved with a chilly, solitary, self-made and dull

business tycoon/millionaire (John Howard). The plot thickens and becomes complicated when her irresponsible ex-husband appears on the eve of the wedding, with intentions to keep her shielded from an overly-ambitious, cynical tabloid newshound (James Stewart) - a second male principal who is also vying for Hepburn's love on the day (and night) leading up to the ceremony. By film's end, she is rescued and persuaded to return to her playful and chastened husband. Ironically, Grant's other film in this same year, *His Girl Friday* (1940), had a similar plot about him trying to win back his ex-wife (Rosalind Russell) from her very soon-to-be-wed fiancée. *Filmsite Movie Review*

---

## Our next screening.... **The Thief of Bagdad**

### The first film in our....**Raoul Walsh Season**



Eden Court Cinema

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2016  
at 7.15pm

The Thief of Bagdad is a  
Silent fantasy adventure  
(1924 USA) in B&W  
by Raoul Walsh

Cast: Douglas Fairbanks,  
Julianne Johnston, Snits  
Edwards



[www.facebook.com/infifa](http://www.facebook.com/infifa)

*Inverness Film Fans (InFiFa) meet  
fortnightly at Eden Court Cinema for  
screenings and post film discussions.  
To join us for free and for more info  
go to:*

[www.invernessfilmfans.org](http://www.invernessfilmfans.org)