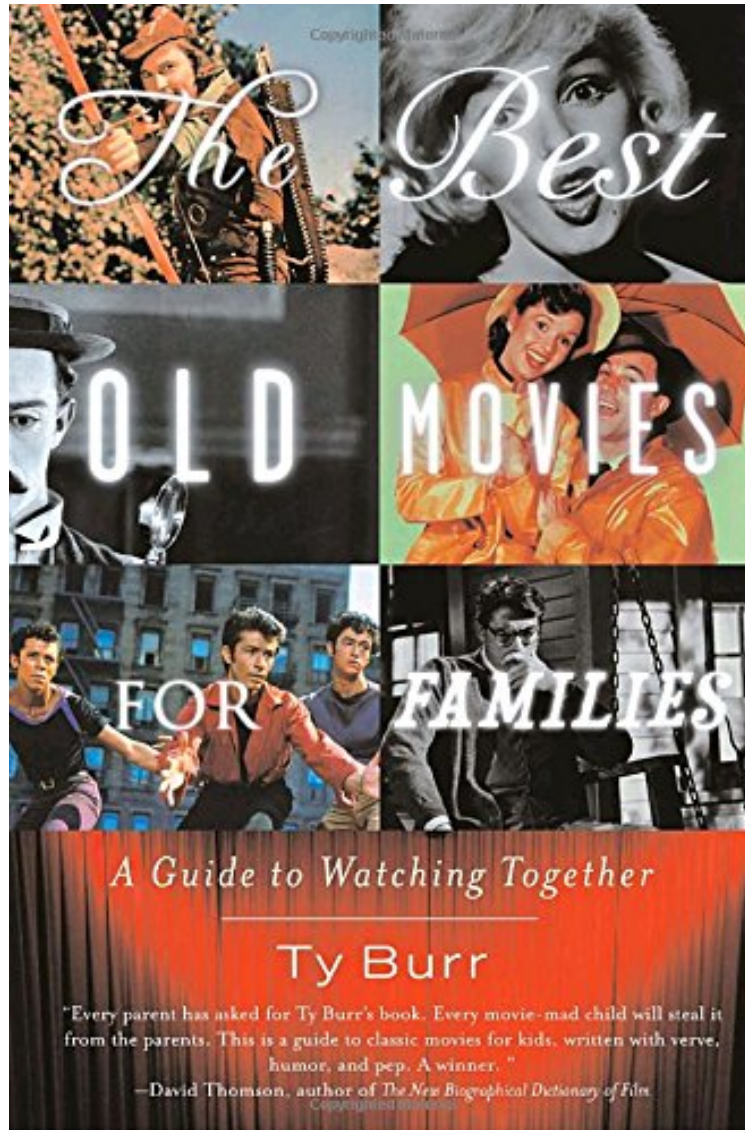


[Free pdf] The Best Old Movies for Families: A Guide to Watching Together

The Best Old Movies for Families: A Guide to Watching Together

Ty Burr

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#622871 in Books Anchor 2007-02-13 2007-02-13Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.30 x .81 x 6.10l, .87
#File Name: 1400096863384 pages | File size: 73.Mb

Ty Burr : The Best Old Movies for Families: A Guide to Watching Together before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Best Old Movies for Families: A Guide to Watching Together:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Full of both love and insightBy Todd PytelI can't recommend this book highly enough. It would be easy to imagine a book like this starting with some thoughtful consideration about family viewing before descending into a dutiful but dull cataloging of 100's of movies. But Burr's passion for film and

insight into kids and families leaps off of every page. It's a real joy to read and sometimes gets me laughing out loud. The book is squarely focused on "Old Hollywood" - the era from the dawn of "talkies" into the early 60's, though it includes some entries on silents and foreign films as well. We prefer a wider-ranging approach in our household and often include foreign films and more recent productions in our movie night lineup. But the book is no less valuable to us - Burr's insights into children and cinema are universal. 16 of 16 people found the following review helpful. What a Great Time this Book is! By R. Stanton This book is a gateway to a GREAT family movie experience! I have a 4 year old son, and although this book is a little more bias toward girls, it in no way forgets the boys. In fact the strength of the book, is in laying the groundwork to open up the world of classic movies (mostly Hollywood, but not exclusively) to young children by combing the various movie genres for age appropriate material and by emphasizing that each child is different. This to me is what makes this book succeed. I've experimented with "Singing in the Rain" and "The Adventures of Robin Hood" so far with universally positive results (my son was somewhat fidgety during the dialog portions of "Singing in the Rain", but was riveted by the singing, dancing, and comedic scenes). "Robin Hood" was a hit from frame one. This book is also a pleasure to read with regard to Mr. Burr's antidotes. You can tell he learned a lot through this process and had a great time doing it. Highly recommend!! 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Inspiring By Deirdre M. I can't say enough good things about this book. It has ended the difficult search for movies that please both the kids and the adults. It has inspired my family to get at least one pre-70s movie every week to watch together. It's been an education. Through this book, we've found a few movies that we all unequivocally adore, and others that we enjoy but have sparked some important deeper conversations. His ideas on why older movies are good for our children are very thoughtful. My daughters are nearly the same age as his daughters were when he wrote the book (9 11), so the book is particularly on target for us. I love how Burr describes his daughters' and their friends' reactions to old movies. I am surprised by how much negativity about older movies he says has received from some of his children's friends and their parents, because my children and their friends have always been completely receptive to older and black white movies. But we don't move in mainstream circles (we are secular homeschoolers), so I will take his word for it. If you enjoy watching movies with your children, you need to own this book.

If a child can watch Barney, cant that same child also enjoy watching Charlie Chaplin or the Marx Brothers? And as they get older, wouldnt they grow to like screwball comedies (His Girl Friday), womens weepies (Imitation of Life), and westerns (The Searchers)? The answer is that theyll follow because theyll have learned that old does not necessarily mean next channel, please. Here is an impassioned and eminently readable guide that introduces the delights of the golden age of movies. Ty Burr has come up with a winning prescription for children brought up on Hollywood junk food. FOR THE LITTLE ONES (Ages 3-6): Fast-paced movies that are simple without being unsophisticated, plainspoken without being dumbed down. Singin in the Rain and Bringing Up Baby are perfect. FOR THE ONES IN BETWEEN (Ages 7-12): Killer stories, placing easily grasped characters in situations that start simply and then throw curveballs. The African Queen and Some Like It Hot do the job well. FOR THE OLDER ONES (Ages 13+): Burr recommends relating old movies to teens contemporary favorites: without Hitchcock, there could be no The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, without Brando, no Johnny Depp.

Every parent has asked for Ty Burrs book. Every movie-mad child will steal it from the parents. This is a guide to classic movies for kids, written with verve, humor, and pep. A winner. David Thomson, author of The New Biographical Dictionary of Film A treasure, a delight, and quite possibly a marriage-saver as well. Ty Burrs advice on when, how, and even why to share with our children the movies we cherish from our own youth is funny, hip, and wise. My ten-year-old stole the book right out of my hands. Julia Glass, National Book Award Winning Author of Three Junes Terrific, necessary, and carried out with integrity, intelligence, sensitivity, and totally without condescension. Ty Burr's book can lead to a lot of pleasure of the life-long kind. Peter Bogdanovich About the Author Ty Burr is the film critic for The Boston Globe, and the father of two. For over a decade he wrote about movies for Entertainment Weekly, and estimates he has seen 10,680 films. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. I N T R O D U C T I O N I KNEW WE had passed some twisted point of no return when Eliza announced that she wanted to have a Katharine Hepburn party. With a screening of Bringing Up Baby. For her ninth birthday. My wife, Lori, and I tried to dissuade her. Maybe our daughter could gladly sit through a fifth viewing of the screwball comedy classic, but how many of her schoolmates would make it through their first, conditioned as they were to color, brightness, Shrek? Eliza was unmoved: It was her birthday, and she argued convincingly for the constitutional right to choose her own party theme. So out the invitations went, featuring a photo of Hepburn in The Philadelphia Story that Eliza personally cut out and pasted on. And in came the phone calls from the parents. To my chagrin, most of them were convinced that her father the fancy-pants movie critic had put her up to it (on a stack of the collected works of Wong Kar-Wai, I did no such thing), but their more pressing concern, which we shared, was that their child would get bored, wander off, play with knives. My wife and I assured them we were laying out a table next to the screening room, filled with books and pencil-based activities to divert those kids oppressed by the very notion of black-and-white cinematography. The books were never opened, the pencils never used. We took a half-hour intermission for

cake, but when I asked if the group was ready to restart the movie, there was a unanimous roar of assent, and we picked up again with that marvelous forest-of-Arden sequence where Kate, playing flibbertigibbet heiress Susan Vance, leads Cary Grant's nerd zoologist David Huxley through the nighttime wilds of Greenwich, Connecticut. At one point Susan breaks a high heel and teeters up and down, burbling in delight, "Look, David, I was born on a hill. I was born on the side of a hill," and the moment feels so spontaneous, so magically free, it can make your hair stand on end. (In fact, the bit was mischievously improvised by Hepburn after the 1938 equivalent of a wardrobe malfunction.) The kids had never seen anything like it: It felt more unscripted, more real than anything twenty-first-century kid culture feeds them, up to and including reality TV. When the parents showed up to collect their children, five minutes remained—Grant was still stuck in the jail cell with Hepburn dragging the wild leopard through the door—and eighteen kids sat mesmerized and giggling. The moms and dads were astounded. They shouldn't have been, nor should Lori or I. Great filmmaking trumps all other considerations. This is even more true if you're nine and every movie still feels like the first you've ever seen. Some backtracking may be necessary. I work as a film critic for a major metropolitan daily newspaper. Before that, I spent over a decade writing about movies for a national entertainment magazine. Before that, I screened and recommended films for the acquisitions department of a pay-cable movie network. Before that, I was a cinema studies major, ran a college film society, and wrote long, impenetrable reviews in the student newspaper. Before that, I was a pale teenage movie ghost who wondered why taking a girl to a double bill of Sam Fuller films never got me anywhere. This is simply a way of saying that I have seen many, many, many movies. When asked how many, I hazard the guess that I average a movie a day, and, since I've been watching seriously for thirty years, the total comes to something on the order of 10,680 films. On a good day, I remember seven thousand of them. On a bad day, maybe five. I am also now a father to two girls, currently nine and eleven. As any parent understands, this changes everything. I once viewed children's films with indulgence, even nostalgia. Today I look at the movie offerings afforded my kids and am stunned into depression at the pandering narrowness. The animation industry has given itself over to the seductions of CGI; live-action kid films have prostrated themselves on the altar of crossmarketing. If you're a girl, the choices are thin: Shall we take in the Lindsay Lohan tweener comedy or the Amanda Bynes tweener comedy or the Hilary Duff tweener comedy? Better to go for the Anne Hathaway tweener comedy; that one costars Julie Andrews, at least. (Oh, wait, Anne Hathaway took her shirt off in a movie about gay cowboys, so I guess she's all grown up now.) Or maybe we should just head to the video store and choose among the racks of Mary-Kate and Ashley midget consumer fantasies that continue to proliferate like head lice on the shelves. Failing that, there are untold Disney films and imitations thereof, from the pinnacles of Snow White and Beauty and the Beast to the barely acceptable tedium of Chicken Little and The Wild. It's worse if you're a boy: Then the choice is between bad American animation, bad Japanese animation, and Spy Kids 3-D. And those are the original concepts. When a film studio takes it upon itself to adapt a prized children's book, the results can be even more grim, since producers feel they have to make the story marketable with fart gags, cooked-up villainy, and pop songs wedged into every conceivable crevice. Some titles survive the treatment, and even prosper, such as Shrek or The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, or the 2003 Peter Pan, a charming film that rescues and deepens the Barrie original. But my older daughter is still steamed at the changes wrought by Hollywood to her beloved Ella Enchanted, and I personally would be happy to see Imagine Entertainment brought up on child endangerment charges for what it did to the good and gentle Dr. Seuss with How the Grinch Stole Christmas and the genuinely hateful The Cat in the Hat. Some films aimed at children are good—excellent, even. Pixar: I rest my case. But all of them—and I do mean all of them—arrive in theaters sold out, prepackaged, and co-opted. A modern family film can't get greenlit for production without marketing tie-ins planned in detail and in-house licensing executives kicking the tires to discern how "toyetic" it is. That's a real word, by the way. Yes, it makes my flesh crawl too. Today's kids' films are built to cater to and flatter their audience into buying the subsidiary products. That's their job. That bag of "Kelpy Kremer" doughnuts that gets a loving close-up early on in Shark Tale isn't there by accident. And because the movie's first order of business is to sell, the story can't afford to challenge children in the slightest degree. So: A child could go from January to December without having his or her brain interestingly taxed—without seeing a movie that wasn't slavishly geared toward mini-me taste in stars, fashion, music, and flippant attitude. (The moral is applied at the end, like frosting.) Hollywood has become a machine for reflecting a modern American kid's mediated universe right back at him or her; it's a hall of mirrors with no way out except teenage cynicism, when adolescents opt out of the cycle because they start feeling such movies are "just" for kids. Or because they're wising up. Even then, Hollywood is there to pull them back in with an escalating sensationalism that dulls the brain. The film industry has become adept at creating brilliant CGI-enhanced nightmares and selling them as "family films" that make Psycho look like Dumbo. The studios and MPAA ratings board collude in helping films that feature rotting zombies avoid the R of death (just as long as there's no nudity, because we know how that warps kids), and parents often take the smallest children to see terrifying PG-13 thrill rides like Van Helsing or Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest because the rating somehow absolves them of having to think for themselves. But what's the alternative? Drag 'em to Kill Bill: Vol. 1? Where's the antidote to the Disneyfied pap and computer-generated overstimulation that passes for children's entertainment these days? Wouldn't it be pleasant to sit down and watch a movie with your kids that wasn't presold on sequels and Happy Meals? Or take them to an action

movie that didn't either freak them out or weigh down their little bones with premature irony? I guess you could lock them in the attic. A better solution might be to vary their media diet, and one way to do that is with old movies. I don't mean Grease or Star Wars. I mean old movies. The kind in black and white or Crayola-surreal Technicolor; the ones that feature stars who were in the grave before Keira Knightley was a zygote. Movies like *The Wizard of Oz* and *Singin' in the Rain*, yes-but also *Some Like It Hot* and *Rebecca* and *Modern Times* and *The Searchers* and *All About Eve* and *I Know Where I'm Going!* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Movies that open a door out of modern Hollywood's hall of mirrors onto endless variations in style, behavior, morals. There is so much out there if you have the least idea where to look. If you don't, maybe this book can help. The first obstacle you'll face is that, in all likelihood, your kids will give you the Blank Stare of Death when you float this idea past them. Why wouldn't they? To parents, old movies represent the recent past, but to a modern child, they're relics from the Dark Ages, mixed up in a vague chronology that sees 45 records, rotary telephones, and granny glasses as so much weird eBay effluvia. The great flicks of the studio days, from the 1930s through the 1950s, are ghettoized on Turner Classic Movies, while other movie channels play "classics" that are fifteen years old-mere babies, with none of the timeless splendor of the real stuff. How, then, do you get kids into the real stuff? It isn't easy, and the older they get, the harder it becomes. The best and simplest advice, then, is: Start when they're young. Am I advocating screening *The Gold Rush* while your children are still in the cradle? No, because that's when they should be watching the world. Am I saying throw it on as occasional background when they're toddlers, or as part of the eventual kid-TV mix in your house, whatever that may be? Yes. If a child can watch Barney, a child can watch Charlie Chaplin, and in fact, he or she might be better off. As they get older, you can gradually take them to the next level: screwball comedies and women's weepies, war films and issue dramas. They'll follow because they'll have learned that "old" does not necessarily mean "next channel, please." If you're bringing children between the ages of, say, seven and eleven to classic movies for the first time, you need to pick more carefully, or you'll sour them on the form for good. And if you're hoping to start watching black-and-white films with teenagers, I'm afraid to inform you that the horses have left the barn, gone to Lost, MySpace, YouTube, and Ryan Reynolds comedies. And they're not coming back until they find these films on their own. Which doesn't mean you can't try: This book suggests which old movies retain the power to make even a deeply suspicious adolescent snap his or her head back and say, "Whoa." Scientists call this Going Keanu. Here's where I should perhaps offer my own test case as proof; I'll let you decide whether it's a brilliant approach that gives you the go-ahead to break out the Bogart or a horrific Skinner-box exploitation of an author's own children. I introduced Eliza to old movies with *Singin' in the Rain* when she was about three. What's not to like there? It's in color, it's tuneful, Donald O'Connor is a clown for the ages, and even a child can see what makes Gene Kelly such a beautiful ham. She warbled the title song for a good couple of weeks, with strange toddler variations, and then I decided to throw a few more 1950s musicals at her. *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. *Funny Face*. *An American in Paris*. *Kiss Me Kate*. She loved them all, even when she had no idea what was going on. With *Meet Me in St. Louis* she figured out what was going on and cherished the film all the more-and in *Margaret O'Brien* she discovered the first real child she had ever seen in a movie. When I took her to a revival-theater screening of *It's Always Fair Weather* in New York City, one of the scary old-movie guys in the row behind me leaned forward and whispered, "Is she into Comden and Green?" The funny part is that by then she was, even if she had no idea that Betty Comden and Adolph Green were the ace screenwriters and lyricists behind so many of the movies she was enjoying. As Eliza got older and her younger sister Natalie grew out of the spud phase and started walking and talking, I began to throw different sorts of old movies at them. I tried silent comedies, seeking some inchoate connection between my children and my own dad, who died when I was young and who was known for his love of slapstick: Chaplin, Keaton, Harold Lloyd. I tried other silents, too-early sci-fi like *Metropolis* and seminal horror like *The Phantom of the Opera* with Lon Chaney. The girls were understandably wary but got sucked in time and again, and the silent-movie format was part of the appeal: those evanescent shadows, the title cards that Dad had to read, the larger-than-life pantomime, all the more dreamlike for not talking. I tried talkies too, of course: melodramas, comedies, even foreign films. To a few of my acquaintances I am still known as *The Man Who Showed The Seven Samurai to His Kids*. And They Liked It. Some of the movies went over incredibly well. Some tanked. The dirty little secret about classics is that a lot of them have aged poorly and others weren't very good to start with. Still, my daughters came to understand that a DVD with the name Alfred Hitchcock or Frank Capra attached was probably a good deal. They discovered that Harpo Marx could make them laugh as deliriously as SpongeBob. And they found films that scared them pleasurably instead of silly. They still want to see the latest studio kid flicks and buy the sound tracks and form their generational tastes, and that's as it should be. But classic movies are a regular part of the mix now, and for Eliza, they've become something more-a way into an older America that she finds soul-satisfying on any number of levels. Watching the 1933 version of *Little Women* was for her a revelation that female empowerment doesn't have to come dressed in a belly shirt; discovering Kate Hepburn gave her a role model that will shape her into adolescence and beyond.