

## Golden Oldies

By Marilyn Reeves

Some folks swear by the old black & white classics. Citizen Kane and his Rosebud. Bogie's "Here's looking at you, kid," to Ingrid Bergman in *Casa Blanca*. Although I grew up watching many black & white movies, I've always loved color. I remember feeling disappointed when *The Wizard of Oz* started out in black & white, but then delighted when it immediately changed to beautiful Technicolor the minute Dorothy landed in Oz. Black & white is perhaps more dramatic and creates a more solemn mood. Color is more vibrant and life-like.

Over the years, movies have become increasingly more realistic. Back then, actors over-enunciating all their words – an apparent carry-over from live theater. Even their movements were stilted. Actors speak more naturally now, and their movements much more authentic.

Special effects have also evolved so that today we are able to see dinosaurs and other impossible creatures that look so real we forget that they are computer-generated. But over-use of special effects can also ruin a film. Certainly the most recent version of King Kong looks a whole lot better than he did back when he was wooing Fay Wray, appearing like some guy wearing a gorilla suit one minute and then as big Godzilla the next. But at least the earlier film stuck to the script and didn't find it necessary to add giant insects or dinosaurs tumbling down a ravine in the mix. Nevertheless, special effects are a marvelous enhancement when used appropriately.

My own taste seems to have evolved over the years as well. Sometimes an old favorite can lose its appeal when judged by modern-day standards. Occasionally I'll look back at an old film like *The Night of the Hunter*, with Robert Mitchum playing the part of an evil preacher pursuing a couple of young children seeking shelter in the darkness of the night. I had remembered it being one of the scariest movies I'd ever seen. But when I saw it again recently, I couldn't help but notice how unnatural the dialogue was, how poor and unconvincing the acting. Rather than scary, it just seemed a bit ludicrous, in comparison to the way that films are made today.

Another of my favorite oldies was a little gem called *The African Queen*, starring Humphrey Bogart and Katherine Hepburn. During WWI the haggard looking captain of a rickety old riverboat called The African Queen rescued an old maid missionary, who convinced him to go up the Ulana River to torpedo the Louisa, a German warship which had been blocking access to a big lake. It was a great adventure as well as a touching love story, and I watched it so many times in years past that I virtually had it memorized. But when it recently appeared on the list of free movies offered by Xfinity, I decided to take a pass. I thought that perhaps my good memories of the film should be left well enough alone.

I believe that the key to enjoying some of the old vintage films is to be able to suspend your judgment and not compare them to the ones made today. If you are unable to do that, then – whether they are black & white or in color – your memory of a Golden Oldie may actually be better than revisiting the film itself.