

## A ticket to the 'greatest movies ever made' --

### Bedford Playhouse introduces 'Classic Tuesdays' series

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What makes a movie a classic? Bedford resident John Farr, who helped spearhead the restoration and reopening of the Bedford Playhouse, says he's "always had a thing about celebrating the greatest movies ever made, be they new or not new. These are movies that still resonate after decades because they're that good- they're timeless and meant to be seen in a group, a community, on the big screen."

The Bedford Playhouse is doing just that with its new "Classic Tuesday" series, which kicks off Tuesday, January 29, with a 7 p.m. showing of Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo," presented in 4K restoration in the Playhouse's main theater. Each "Classic Tuesdays" presentation with feature Mr. Farr for introducing the film, offering audience members a brief look into the making of the movie, how it was received and how it's reputation grew or evolved over time. "I've been doing these kinds of events in theaters up and down the East Coast for 10 years or so," Mr. Farr said. "The goal is to give audiences just enough background and trivia so they're literally leaning forward and thinking, I want to see this." The American Film Institute has a list of top 100 movies ranked by professionals and critics. Depending on the age of movie fans, many of these top 100 movies have been seen before but perhaps not in movie theaters on big screen. Classic Tuesday's aims to remedy that. After screenings, guests will be invited to join Mr. Farr for "Farr at the bar," which features drinks and casual conversation in the Playhouse Café.

The "Classic Tuesdays" series is part of what Mr. Farr calls the 'crusade' he and his wife embarked on that 15 years ago when they started a website, [bestmoviesbyfarr.com](http://bestmoviesbyfarr.com). "The whole purpose of that was to help people identify which movies are available to watch at



home," Mr. Farr said, "Back in the day you just drove to Blockbuster, and now you try to go on Netflix or Amazon and you're overwhelmed by choice. People need guidance and curation because they're busy with other things in their lives."

"Vertigo," starring Barbara BelGeddes, Henry Jones, James Stewart, Kim Novak and Tom Helmore, is the story of a retired San Francisco detective suffering from acrophobia who investigates the strange activities of an old friend's wife who is coming dangerously obsessed with her. After he saves the suicidal wife, played by Ms. Novak, from drowning in the bay Mr. Stewart's character's interest shifts from business to fascination with the icy, alluring blonde. When he finds another woman remarkably like his lost love, the now-obsessed detective must unravel the secrets of the past to find the key to his future.

"Vertigo" is considered by many to be Hitchcock's greatest cinematic achievement. "A great thing about the classics is that the movies can improve with time and the respect certain movies command can improve with time," Mr. Farr said, and "Vertigo" is a perfect example. It was not a flop by any means when it came out, but Hitchcock was not completely satisfied. He felt Stewart was miscast, wasn't sexy enough. But the decades pass and the films get restored and re-released. All of a sudden it has a rebirth. This is a great, great film, and one of the more complex movies from a psychological point of view. There's a beautiful score and Jimmy Stewart is wonderful." Mr. Farr wondered aloud, "Would Cary Grant have been better? That would've been interesting, he didn't get or take the part."

Future "Classic Tuesday" showings include "My Man Godfrey," a 1936 film, on February 26 and "On the Waterfront," from 1954, on March 26. Mr. Farr described the February offering as one of the great comedies and the March offering 'perhaps Brando's best role, although of course you can argue about 'The Godfather' and "Streetcar."

Seeing classic movies in the setting such as the Bedford Playhouse with give audience members a chance to turn off your cellphones and connect to what they're watching. "They're captive audiences, with total focus on the film," Mr. Farr said. "They know they've seen the movie before, but have never seen it quite like this." Mr. Farr has interviewed many directors and movie actors over the past 15 years. One of the first was director Robert Altman. The director "made a casual comment that's guided me ever since," said Mr. Farr. Mr. Altman remarked, "It's always better to see a great movie again than an average one for the first time. Even though the movie hasn't changed, you have, you always see something new."

That insight, Mr. Farr said "is really what drives this for me. A movie that is truly extraordinary has a different impact and effect than an average movie. He cited as an example the showing of "Casablanca" on the Playhouse's opening day in the big-screen main theater." People were stunned, just stunned," Mr. Farr said. "They'd seen the movie before or some most or part of it but none had seen it like that. Audience members were blown away

"There's an overused term called 'community,' but what the Playhouse is doing is creating community in Bedford." Mr. Farr continued, "not to say there was no community in Bedford, but when you go to see a film, hear someone speak or see a live event, especially with interaction by the audience, that's magic. You're seeing people you wouldn't otherwise see and you're talking about what you've seen and experience together, and that's community. To see it and feel it is palpable; you feel the energy and feel the joy people have."

Mr. Farr cited Playhouse board member Bob Harris, who was involved in the Playhouse restoration project from beginning, for ensuring the highest quality movie-going experience. "Bob said we cannot compromise on the quality of equipment that we buy. Our sound system is second to none, all the tech equipment is cutting edge, and you feel it when you experience movies."

Mr. Farr recounted, "a particularly satisfying moment" when legendary director James Ivory came to the Playhouse for a talk and showing of his film, "The Remains of the Day." "He was almost in tears and there was a

look of wonder on his face," he recalled. "He said he had not seen his film look that beautiful since the first premiered in 1993. For Jim Ivory to say what he said to me, I will never forget."

Audience members often have questions when the movie is over," and the bar area is the perfect spot to discuss what people have seen," Mr. Farr said. "I'm basically a self-made film historian and have loved movies since I was very young," he continued, "so I can usually explain why this character did this or that. People enjoy sharing their opinions, I want to hear what they think, make sure these movies are as great as we say they are."

Commenting on the Playhouse's diverse programming, he added, " the idea is that the Playhouse is movies and more. That's what will sustain us. If you're just doing movies it's not casting as wide a net as needed. The Playhouse can be all sorts of different things to different people, but it's already making a big impact on the town."