



Courtesy of Citadel Press

James Stewart with Jean Arthur in "You Can't Take It With You."

## Capra/Stewart magic Film caught spirit of America

Screwball comedy and the power of Americana dominated the silver screen and stage throughout the '30s. Many popular plays were transformed into perfection through the magic of the big screen.

Two of the most popular playwrights, George S. Kaufmann and Moss Hart, had a score of their plays made into films. The most notable of these was "You Can't Take It With You."

Twisting the arm of frugal Columbia Pictures mogul Harry Cohn, Frank Capra persuaded Cohn to pay \$200,000 for the Pulitzer Prize-winning play. "You Can't Take It With You" had been the sensation on Broadway in 1936-37, and Capra ensured Cohn that it was "a sure thing."

Again, Capra donned his power of persuasion to convince Cohn to borrow James Stewart from MGM. Capra argued that no other actor was suited for the lead role.

"I had seen Jimmy Stewart play a sensitive, heart-grabbing role in MGM's "Navy Blue and Gold" (1937). I sensed the character and rock-ribbed honesty of a Gary Cooper, plus the breeding and intelligence of an Ivy League idealist," Capra said.

In Capra's vision of idealized Americana, no other actor fit the bill quite as nicely. Capra was right. Capra and Stewart later collaborated for two of both Capra's and Stewart's most popular and highly



acclaimed films, "Mr. Smith Goes To Washington" in 1939 and "It's A Wonderful Life" in 1947.

In "You Can't Take It With You," Capra cast his favorite actress, Jean Arthur, queen of the screwball comedy, as Alice Sycamore, one member of a zany family. Lionel Barrymore was cast in the role of Arthur's grandfather, Martin Vanderhoff.

Barrymore, at the age of 60, was so stricken by arthritis that he needed crutches to move around on. Capra and screenplay author, Robert Riskin, worked around Barrymore's handicap by fitting him with a cast and adding an explanation of Grandpa Sycamore sliding down the bannister in a fit of youth.

Of the entire Sycamore family, Arthur is the only member to hold a paying job, acting as secretary to Kirby vice-president, Tony Kirby, played by a spry 30-year-old James Stewart. Naturally, the conflict arises between the stuffiness of the working-class Kirbys and the idyllic existence of the Sycamores.

"You can't take it with you! The only thing you can take with you is

the love of your friends," Barrymore sums up.

"You Can't Take It With You" captured the spirit of the ideal America, providing the perfect escape from the dreary brooding and immediate threat of war in Europe. The film drew large audiences and critical attention, and gained seven Oscar nominations. "You Can't Take It With You" garnered an Oscar for best picture, as well as earning Capra his third Oscar for directing.

James Stewart's popularity grew, too, though only receiving his still modest salary from MGM. And although MGM profited from their loan-out, Stewart was the clear winner. "You Can't Take It With You" was an integral step in the definition of the inimitable character of James Stewart.

A critic for the "New Statesman" summed up the character of Stewart in their 1938 review of the film's release.

"No actor on the screen today manages to appear more unconscious of script, camera and director than Mr. Stewart."

After 2 1/2 years in Hollywood, he starred in his 16th film at 30 years of age — not a bad place to be for the young James Stewart.

Stock is a junior English major and a Daily Nebraskan Arts and Entertainment staff reporter and columnist.

## Lied audience savors Preservation Hall jazz

*Celebration of love,  
life ignites listeners  
to come marching in*

By Michael Stock  
Staff Reporter

Looking up at the collection of men on stage, Lied audiences reveled in a Preservation Hall Jazz Band celebration of life and jazz the old-fashioned way Wednesday night.

Humphrey Band rhythms ranged from the delicate click of a late-night walk in the French Quarter to the brisk hop-skip pace set by a trio of 80-year-old men and their younger, fellow bandmates.

A lively spirit and memories of youth flowed from the reed of clarinetist, David Griller, with rolling clarinet solos of shivers and jigs. When Frank Demond joined in on trombone, Lied audiences paid special attention. Demond wandered around the Lied stage hamming up the show with glissandos, as the bent 86-year old band leader and trumpeter, Percy Humphrey blew high lofty solos.

Narvin Kimball's banjo picks o'

plenty provided an accurate sense of the period. Lars Edegran's piano solos and bits were heartfelt pieces of old-time rag, capturing melodies and providing traipsing rhythms.

The melodious tune of "This Is A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening" carried a bluesy roll with the thumping march of bass and rolled snare. Griller's clarinet solo had a rich, full sound, even as the lilt of Demond's trombone sang sadly.

Trash-can cats and late-night types all tapped their toes to the bassist James Prevost's bass solo and drummer Joe Lastie. Even Lied audiences couldn't repress the need to slap their palms red by the end of the evening.

By the closing medley, Lied audience members were so ignited that they could swear that their roots really were deep and sweet in the South. The Humphrey Band's rendition of "When the Saints Go Marching In" not only brought the audience to its feet, but trombonist Demond, clarinetist Griller and a banjo-strumming Kimball to the audience.

"C'mon, you're tired of sitting!" Humphrey rasped.

And audience members proceeded to head to the aisles and follow the saintlike band members "marching in" the Lied.

## Japanese insect film Cockroaches humanized

By Robert Richardson  
Senior Reporter

Cockroaches are usually thought of as disgusting, dirty bugs that have no feelings — something that can live through fire.

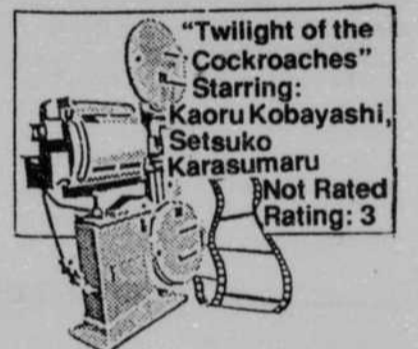
But Japanese producer, writer and director Hiroaki Yoshida portrays these human-faced bugs in a much different light in "Twilight of the Cockroaches."

A cockroach colony has been living in peace for 36 months in the home of Mr. Saito. For the past three years, the bugs have been living like queen bees, as Saito hasn't minded the bugs' occupation of his home. He welcomed their presence and kept them fed on leftovers. They stayed out of his way and he let them live.

But the bugs haven't forgotten the war, death and destruction that plagued their colony when Saito was married. Many of the elder bugs tell the story of their war-torn world to the young ones that weren't around.

Clear and evident in this movie about survival of the fittest are the emotions of the bugs. Their attitudes are happy and carefree. They live in peace with humans and that's all they want.

Enter the strong, handsome and mysterious roach Hans. He is from a whole different world — one that is currently experiencing a war with its female house owner. As he tells his tales of excitement, glory and adventure, he wins the heart of Naomi. She



is 19 in bug years and is to be married to Ichiro — another handsome bug.

The war at the Saito house heats up when he becomes romantically involved with the female house owner. She insists that he clean and begin to rid his house of the pests.

The cockroaches are cartoon characters and the humans are real. But the display of character rests solely within the bugs' daily struggle to survive. Feeling sorry for the cute pests is natural; the presentation of the insects as humans with wings makes them look less than disgusting.

"Twilight of the Cockroaches" literally portrays a bug-eyed comical perception of humans and their selfish capabilities.

"Twilight of the Cockroaches" is showing at the Sheldon Film Theater Sunday at 3 p.m., 5 p.m., 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. Admission is \$5 and \$3 for UNL students with IDs.

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