



By MARKO PERIC

This week -- two reviews for the price of one!

### *North by Northwest*

Cary Grant, Eva Marie Saint, James Mason.  
Directed by Alfred Hitchcock  
1959. 136 minutes, colour. PG

After some consideration, I have decided to change this column somewhat. Oh, I'll still review classic old movies, that is after all the whole purpose of the column. But I like more recent films as well, as demonstrated by recent reviews of *The Princess Bride* and *Blade Runner*. So, to be true to the original purpose of the column, I will stick to reviewing "old" films. However, I will also include a mini-review of a newer film that I feel is similar to the featured classic. This should keep everyone happy. Also, I would like to thank the good people at Blockbuster Video for providing free movie rentals from their extensive selection. But without further ado, on with the column.

Roger Thornhill (Grant) is a Madison Avenue advertising exec, who works too hard and drinks too much. He is kidnapped by two thugs who mistake him for a Mr. Kaplan, a government agent, and take him to their boss, Van Damme (James Mason, not to be confused with everyone's favourite kickboxer, street fighter, and universal soldier). Needless to say, Thornhill is not privy to the government secrets Van Damme wants. When he does not cooperate, they decide to kill him. To

make it look like an accident, his captors get him drunk and put him in a car on a mountain road. However, Thornhill holds his liquor quite well, and sobers up enough to hit a police car instead of driving off a cliff. The police do not believe his story about being abducted, and Van Damme's men cover their tracks perfectly. His only recourse is to find Mr. Kaplan, who has apparently gone to Chicago. Van Damme's men want him out of the way, so they frame him for a murder. Now, with the thugs and the police after him, Thornhill takes the train to Chicago. En route he spends the night with a beautiful girl (Saint) who hides him from the police. Upon arrival, she helps him arrange a meeting with Kaplan, but it turns out to be a trap.

That is more than enough of the plot. The frantic pace continues for the next half of the film, with Thornhill trying to find Kaplan, gunning for Van Damme, and not certain whether he can trust the girl he met on the train. You'll have to watch it to see how it ends up.

Acting: Saint and Mason are good, as are several of the minor characters, but Cary Grant really steals the show. From annoyed kidnapped Adman, to curious sleuth, to temporary government agent, his acting is superb. Few actions could keep up with Hitchcock's frantic pace, but Grant has no difficulties. One other person who deserves mention is Martin Landau, who is wonderful as Van Damme's ice-cold right hand man.

Direction: Hitchcock was the master of suspense thrillers, and *North by Northwest* is among his best. He keeps the film at a break-neck pace, and uses countless locales, ranging from a cornfield to Mt. Rushmore. Despite all the activity, the action almost always follows Cary Grant's character, so it isn't difficult to keep track of all that's going on. Unlike some of Hitchcock's best known films, notably *The Birds* and *Psycho*, this isn't especially scary. It is exciting, however, and Hitchcock has made it very re-watchable. In fact, you will have to see it at least twice before you understand everything that takes place.

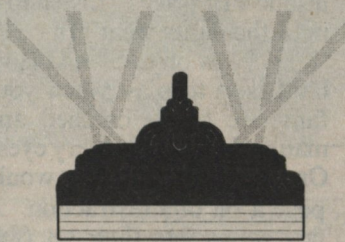
Memorable Scenes: Half of the movie could be listed in this category. Particularly good are the cornfield scene and the drunk driving scene. For humour, the scene at the auction in Chicago is

great. Grant is hilarious in his escape from Van Damme's clutches. Also, the finale at Mt. Rushmore is definitely impressive.

Best Lines: Everything Grant says is priceless, but probably his best line is "I've got a mother, a secretary, two ex-wives and several bartenders dependent on me. I can't disappoint them by ending up slightly killed."

Bottom Line: Frantic and fun, with plenty of excitement. Hitchcock at his best. Need I say more?

Available: At Blockbuster for sure, and probably at Plaza and That's Entertainment as well. I have doubts about the smaller stores.



Recent Comparison:  
*Mission Impossible*

Tom Cruise, Jon Voight, Emmanuelle Beart.

Directed by Brian De Palma  
1996. 110 minutes. Colour.  
PG-13.

I know, at a glance the two seem entirely different. But, both are thrillers featuring dashingly handsome heroes framed for crimes they did not commit. Both heroes get involved with beautiful women who may or may not be trustworthy, and both have to contend with government agencies that "don't exist" while avoiding the clutches of scheming criminals.

As well, the directors are veterans who know how to pace a film at break-neck speed without confusing viewers, and toss in a little brilliant comic relief. And both films keep you glued to your seats for roughly two hours. If you liked one, watch the other.

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