

The Lady Eve

Written and directed by Preston Sturges

USA 1941, 92 mins, Cert U

A BFI release

Starring Barbara Stanwyck, Henry Fonda, Charles Coburn

'You can't get a better romantic comedy than The Lady Eve'
Peter Bogdanovich (*Paper Moon, The Last Picture Show*)



**Opening at selected cinemas UK-wide from 15 February 2019 with
Valentine's Day previews**

18 December 2018 – **The Lady Eve** is a match made in cinematic heaven; a screwball comedy from the master of the genre, **Preston Sturges** (1898–1959), starring two film legends – **Barbara Stanwyck** (1907–1990) and **Henry Fonda** (1905–1982). This fast-talking battle-of-the-sexes romance returns to the big screen in selected cinemas UK-wide on **15 February 2019**, with Valentine's Day previews offering a dream night out on 14 February for fans of the Golden Age of Hollywood. The film will be screened as an extended run during '**Starring Barbara Stanwyck**', the forthcoming season at BFI Southbank that takes place from 1 February until 20 March 2019.

The Lady Eve was based on a short story by the screenwriter and playwright Monckton Hoffe who in turn played on the biblical fable of Adam and Eve. Glamorous con-artist Jean Harrington (**Barbara Stanwyck**) manipulates her way through life, getting what she wants with skill, charm and charisma. On a cruise ship, she sets her sights on Charles 'Hopsie' Pike (**Henry Fonda**), an innocent, gullible millionaire and snake scientist, who falls for her in a heartbeat. But he learns about her dubious past... and her ruse comes undone when she genuinely falls for him...

In one of her most memorable roles, Barbara Stanwyck brilliantly portrays a confident, witty, resourceful woman in pursuit of revenge – and love. The chemistry between Stanwyck and Fonda is electrifying, and with **Charles Coburn** lending sterling support as 'Colonel' Harrington, Jean's father and partner in crime, this screwball classic – hilarious, wild and romantic – remains one for the all-time-best film lists.

Chicago-born Preston Sturges made some of the funniest films in cinema. From audacious screwball comedies to divine lunacy and biting satire, he earned Hollywood's first writer-director credit. Once he had made his name as a writer he wanted to direct. In order to do that, he sold his Oscar-winning screenplay for his 1940 film *The Great McGinty* to Paramount for \$10, on the basis that he could also direct it. A hugely successful comedy, it paved the way for *The Lady Eve* made a year later.

"I was scared to death about The Lady Eve" he once said. "I happen to love pratfalls, but as almost everything I like, other people dislike, and vice versa, my dearest friends and severest critics constantly urged me to cut the pratfalls from five to three. But it was actually the enormous risks I took with my pictures, skating right up to the edge of non-acceptance, that paid off so handsomely."

Surprisingly, given its longevity and standing today and with Barbara Stanwyck's Oscar-worthy performance, the film only received one Academy Award nomination, for Best Original Story.

The Lady Eve was re-made in 1956 as *The Birds and the Bees*, directed by Norman Taurog and starring Mitzi Gaynor, David Niven and George Gobel, but the original is undoubtedly the best and is as fresh and as relevant as ever.

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For further information and images please contact:

Jill Reading, BFI Press Office
E-mail: jill.reading@bfi.org.uk
Tel: 020 7957 4759

More film information and screening venues: www.bfi.org.uk/releases

Notes to Editors

- Running from **Friday 1 February – Wednesday 20 March, 'Starring Barbara Stanwyck'** will be a season dedicated to one of the most successful and memorable Hollywood actors of all time. Barbara Stanwyck's career spanned more than four decades and her versatility saw her take on roles spanning genres from screwball to film noir to melodrama. Alongside an extended run of the BFI re-release of *The Lady Eve* (1941) the season will include screenings of classic films such as *Stella Dallas* (King Vidor, 1937), *Double Indemnity* (Billy Wilder, 1944), *Clash by Night* (Fritz Lang, 1952), *All I Desire* (Douglas Sirk, 1953) and many more.

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