**Imitation of Life (1959) Douglas Sirk**
P Michell, 2015

**Plot:**
Aspiring actress Lora Meredith meets Annie Johnson a homeless black woman at Coney Island and soon they share a tiny apartment. Each woman has an intolerable daughter, though Annie's little girl Sarah Jane, is by far the worse. Neurotic and obnoxious, Sarah Jane doesn't like being black; since she's light-skinned (her father was practically white), she spends the rest of the film passing as white, much to her mother's heartache and shame. Lora, meanwhile, virtually ignores her own daughter in a single-minded quest for stardom.

*Written by alfiehitchie*

**DIRECTOR:** Douglas Sirk  
**SCREENWRITER(S):** Eleanore Griffin, Allan Scott  
Lora Meredith . . . . . . . . Lana Turner  
Steve Archer . . . . John Gavin  
Susie . . . . Sandra Dee  
Sarah Jane . . . . Susan Kohner  
Allen Loomis . . . . Robert Alda  
David Edwards . . . . Dan O’Herlihy  
Annie Johnson . . . . Juanita Moore  
Mahalla Jackson . . . . Herself  
Sarah Jane . . . . Karen Dicker  
Susie . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Terry Burnham  
Young Man . . . . John Vivyan  
Photographer . . . . . Lee Goodman  
Show Girl . . . . Ann Robinson  
Frankle . . . . Troy Donahue  
Colour, RUNTIME: 125 min

PM comment – is this film the result of an auteur director or the Universal Studios (Ross Hunter) movie making 'sausage factory'.  
Note how many women are involved – screen writer, set decorator and casting of Lana Turner & Juanita Moore.

**Selective Creative Personnel:**

**Douglas Sirk** (1897 -1987) German  
48 films. Reputation made on the Universal melodramas from late 1940s climaxing with Imitation of Life.

His reputation blossomed in the generation after his 1959 retirement from Hollywood filmmaking, was born Hans Detlef Sierck on April 26, 1900, in Hamburg, Germany, to a journalist. Both of his parents were Danish, and the future director would make movies in German, Danish and English. His reputation, which was breathed to life by the French nouvelle vague critiques who developed the "auteur"
(author) theory of film criticism, casts him as one of the cinema's great ironists. In his American and European films, his characters perceive their lives quite differently than does the movie audience viewing "them" in a theater. Dealing with love, death and societal constraints, his films often depend on melodrama, particularly the high-suds soap operas he lensed for producer Ross Hunter in the 1950s: Magnificent Obsession (1954), All That Heaven Allows (1955) and his last American film, Imitation of Life (1959).

Senses of Cinema by Tom Ryan:
Much of Sirk's critical reputation currently rests on four of the melodramas he made during the 1950s: All That Heaven Allows, Written on the Wind, The Tarnished Angels and Imitation of Life. Some recognition has been given to three other films from this period, including All I Desire (1953), There's Always Tomorrow, and A Time To Love And A Time To Die. And four of the films he made in Germany – Stutzen der Gesellschaft, his 1935 adaptation of Ibsen's Pillars of Society, Schlussakkord, the Australia-set Zu Neuen Ufern (To Distant Shores, 1937) and La Habanera – have received a limited amount of critical attention.

No other director has been more closely associated with the concept of melodrama in cinema than Douglas Sirk... While popular with audiences, Sirk’s films were often condemned by contemporary film critics as examples of the sensationalism and sentimentality of popular cinema. However, in France, the critics of the influential Cahiers du Cinéma, notably François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, praised Sirk’s distinctive visual style. In the early 1970s a new generation of film scholars, notably Thomas Elsaesser, Paul Willemen, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, and Fred Camper, “rediscovered” Sirk’s films, hailing them as supreme examples of a subversive critique of postwar American society expressed through stylized mise-en-scène drawing on irony and Brechtian alienating devices. Sirk’s work has influenced many subsequent filmmakers including Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Martin Scorsese, John Waters, Pedro Almodóvar, Jonathan Demme, and Todd Haynes." http://www.theyshootpictures.com/sirkdouglas.htm

Rest of the quite good blog here:
http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0802862/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm


Most of his films tended to be bright confections - with stars such as Debbie Reynolds, and Julie Andrews - or three-hankie remakes of films such as Imitation of Life (1959), which resurrected the career of Lana Turner. His production principle was that audiences should leave the theater either laughing or crying. His biggest
success was the film *Airport* (1970), for which he received his only Oscar nomination. It was such a success that in 1973, he noted that "for three years, Universal's been living on Airport." He ended his long career at Universal joining Columbia in 1971 and then Paramount in 1974, where he produced TV movies.

Quotes: "The films weren't great, but they weren't supposed to be ... I gave the public what they wanted a chance to dream, to live vicariously, to see beautiful women, jewels, gorgeous clothes, melodrama."

“The way life looks in my pictures is the way I want life to be. I don’t to hold a mirror up to life as it is. I just want to show the part which is attractive."

**Frank Skinner** (1897 – 1968) – composer –
Started off in Hollywood as arranger for The Great Ziegfeld filmed at MGM (1936). 'Oh Shenandoah’ from the film (1965) became popular. Wrote many books on composing and arranging.

Both did Spartacus (1960) and Heron did Lubitsch's To Be or Not to Be (1942) and much TV work inc Alfred Hitchcock Presents – 44 episodes (1959-1962).

**Juanita Moore** (1914-2014) 83 films / tv appearances
She was an American film, television, and stage actress. She was the fifth African American to be nominated for an Academy Award in any category, and the third in the Supporting Actress category at a time when only a single African American had won an Oscar. Her most famous role was as Annie Johnson in the movie *Imitation of Life* (1959).

Born in Greenwood, Mississippi, the daughter of Ella (née Dunn) and Harrison Moore, she had seven siblings, (six sisters and one brother).[2] She was raised in Los Angeles. Moore was a chorus girl at the Cotton Club before becoming a film extra while working in theater. After making her film debut in *Pinky* (1949), she had a number of bit parts and supporting roles in motion pictures through the 1950s and 1960s. However, her role in *Imitation of Life* (1959), a remake, as housekeeper Annie Johnson, whose daughter Sarah Jane (Susan Kohner) passes for white, won her a nomination for an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress. She was also nominated for the Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actress in a Motion Picture for the role.

**Guardian Obituary:**
http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/jan/02/juanita-moore
Eleanore Griffin - Co-Scriptwriter (adaptation) – (1904 – 1995)
24 films including 'Harvey Girls (1946), Only Angels Have Wings (1939)
Griffin worked as a screenwriter for almost 30 years, but ironically, "Boys Town" (1938 co-written with Dore Schary) - which came very early in her career - would remain the summit of her achievement. Part of this was due to the exigencies of studio production, in which even a highly paid screenwriter would win an Oscar one year and be penning B-picture potboilers the next. However, it was the vertical integration of the studios, which was complete by the time she established herself in Hollywood in the late 1930s, that likely limited her career, as it did all women from the mid-1930s to the turn of the century.

Women directors were not uncommon during the silent era (in fact, the first "feature" film was directed by a woman, back in 1896), but with the vertical integration of the movie industry in the 1930s women were squeezed out after the advent of the Talkies. It is a truism of organizational theory that the more complex the structure, the more control is exerted over all aspects of the organization, and the more conformity is demanded from organizational players. The corporate hierarchies were dominated by men, and the pressure for conformity made the vertical, publicly traded studios inhospitable to women, who by their very gender, could not conform to the dominant corporate paradigm.

Much more of this excellent biog here:
http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0341178/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm

Allan Scott – Co-Scriptwriter (1906 – 1995)
Known for Fred & Ginger movies of the 1930s – Top Hat (1935), etc. Rhodes scholar at Oxford Uni. Was often a 'script doctor' – 'repairing' other scripts.

Russell Metty - Cinematography – (1906 – 1978)

A superb craftsman who worked with such top directors as John Huston, Stanley Kubrick, Steven Spielberg and Orson Welles, was born in Los Angeles. Entering the movie industry as a lab assistant, Metty apprenticed as an assistant cameraman and graduated to lighting cameraman at RKO Radio Pictures in 1935. Metty's ability to create effects with black-and-white contrast while shooting twilight and night were on display in two films he shot for Orson Welles, The Stranger (1946) and the classic Touch of Evil (1958), the latter showing his mastery of complex crane shots. (Metty shot additional scenes for Welles' second masterpiece, "The Magnificent Ambersons", whose lighting cameraman was Stanley Cortez but had the look of "Citizen Kane", which was shot by Gregg Toland.) At Universal in the 1950s, he enjoyed a productive collaboration with director Douglas Sirk on 10 films from 1953 through 1959, including shooting Sirk's masterpieces "Magnificent Obsession"
(1954) and the 1959 remake of "Imitation of Life". However, his collaboration with director Stanley Kubrick on *Spartacus* (1960) proved troublesome.

**Trivia:**
Lana Turner’s ‘comeback’ movie. She took a much smaller salary, than her usual $25,000 per week and worked for 50% of the film’s profits, which earned her over $2 million (setting a record for an actress at the time).


In 1980 the organizers of the Cannes Film Festival wanted Sirk to be President of the Jury. The telegram sent to their Hollywood office was to read, "Request Douglas Sirk for jury". However, a typo and an extra comma resulted in it reading, "Request Douglas, Kirk for jury". Kirk Douglas became the President of the 1980 jury.

**Reviews:**
*Imitation of Life* (from Slant Magazine)

ED GONZALEZ ON JULY 2, 2003

Rainer Wener Fassbinder and Todd Haynes made it cool to reference Douglas Sirk. But if the esteemed Andrew Sarris hadn’t championed the incisiveness of the German-born director’s dark humor inside the pages of *Film Culture*, there's no telling if Sirk’s rank as one of cinema’s premiere auteurist heroes would be as steadfast as it is today. Sirk’s journey to wide critical acceptance has fascinatingly mirrored the very biting irony of his distinctly feminine melodramas. These misunderstood masterpieces (among them *All That Heaven Allows*, *Written on the Wind* and *Imitation of Life*) were often dismissed as salient, weepy "women's pictures" by critics (no doubt the same ones who easily embraced the more masculine melodramas of Vittorio de Sica, Nicholas Ray, and Sam Fuller) too afraid or unwilling to look beneath their complex surfaces.

In Hollywood, Sirk worked with controversial figures like Albert Zugsmith on *Written on the Wind* and, more notably, gay Hollywood producer Ross Hunter on classics like *There’s Always Tomorrow, Imitation of Life, Magnificent Obsession* and *All That Heaven Allows*. But before turning to film in the 1930s, Sirk made a career for himself as a successful theater director in Germany, staging works by the likes of Shakespeare, Shaw, Pirandello, Ibsen and Brecht. Today it’s almost impossible to look at Sirk’s films without turning to Brecht, whose innovative theories on distancing and alienation are all over films like Fassbinder’s *In a Year of 13 Moons*, Sirk’s *Imitation of Life* and Lars von Trier’s upcoming *Dogville*, a film inspired in part by a song from Kurt Weill and Brecht’s famous *Threepenny Opera*, which Sirk had staged in Bremen in 1929.
Brecht’s theater looked to move away from the expressionistic works that were popular during his time period. In his essay "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," Brecht details his fascination with the Peking Opera and a Chinese form of performance art that actively rejected Western forms of realism in theater. This self-conscious form of acting stresses theatricality and demands active involvement from both the actor and the spectator. With the fourth wall dutifully dismantled, the audience develops an observant relationship to the play’s action that’s extremely volatile. In estranging the audience from the material, Brecht believed they could approach a play’s many themes seriously and critically. Brecht observes, "We see this theater as uncommonly precious, its portrayal of human passions as schematized, its idea of society as rigid and wrong-headed."

1959's sardonic *Imitation of Life* deals with blond bombshell Lora Meredith's rise to fame and her complicated relationships with a series of carnivorous men, her hot-headed daughter, and her angelic African-American maid Annie Johnson (Juanita Moore). Though Lora (Lana Turner) shuns the love of Steve Archer (John Gavin) and lies in order to further her career, she's still a sympathetic character because Sirk understands that she is just as much a victim as her darling Annie. Lora's seedy agent Albert Loomis (Robert Alda) feeds on her desire for fame, pointing out that she's no spring chicken before suggesting she prostitute herself for success. She's hyper-conscious of her dangerous ambition yet she continues to push away the people around her. "Maybe I should see things as they really are and not the way I want them to be," she acknowledges early on.

The film opens with a shot of diamonds slowly falling into a glass container and filling the frame from top to bottom. Sirk immediately and deliberately acknowledges the precious and artificial nature of the film and, much greater, the film's metaphoric, almost pathological obsession with surfaces (from mirrors to the color of the characters’ skins). Both Lora and Steve make a career out of representing the world around them via their art: Lora finds success in the theater with a series of collaborations with playwright David Edwards (Dan O’Herlihy) while Steve lands a major gig at a beer company after selling a picture he took of Lora's daughter Susie (Terry Burnham) and Annie's daughter Sarah Jane (Karin Dicker) on the beaches of Coney Island. Not surprisingly, their art is every bit as grotesquely overwhelming as Sirk's ravishing mise-en-scène.

Indeed, just as Steve's picture of young Susie and Sarah Jane balancing a bottle on a sleeping man's fat stomach is a frightening representation of a seemingly innocent day at the beach, beneath the surface of *Imitation of Life* lies the reality of what Sirk rightfully believed was a seriously deranged American society. He is particularly critical yet sensitive to the light-skinned Sarah Jane's dilemma, who prefers her absent father to her dark-skinned mother because "he was practically white," and goes to great lengths to disguise her mixed race. However ghoulish her rejection of her mother may be, Annie sees the opportunity that her daughter's deceptive skin tone permits. Just as Annie resigns herself to a lifetime of subjugation because of her skin color, Sarah Jane looks to give herself a chance at life by emancipating herself
from that skin.

The film isn’t only revolutionary for its aesthetic rigorousness but its rare fascination with white America’s difficulty relating to people of color. Because it embodies so much of Sirk’s key themes and aesthetic truths, there’s no sadder scene in the film than a dying Annie visiting an older Sarah Jane (Susan Kohner) in Los Angeles after the girl takes a job as a dancer at a club called Moulin Rouge. Sirk’s camera violently pans to one side—just as it does earlier when Sarah Jane’s white boyfriend beats her after finding out her dirty secret—and forces the girl to look at her face in a mirror as she rejects her race. Despite her overwhelming pain, Annie allows herself to abort her relationship with her daughter because she understands the lonely freedom promised to Sarah Jane by distancing herself from her race. Like Annie says early on in the film: “She was born to be hurt.”

_Imitation of Life_ is drunk on the lies and gross assumptions of its characters and the way they feed off of deceptive surfaces. “We didn’t know,” says a schoolteacher to Annie when she comes looking for her daughter in the woman’s classroom. And later when Sarah Jane’s friend enters her hotel room, she assumes Annie is a hotel maid and subsequently reads off a list of demands. Because no one asks her about her race, Sarah Jane doesn’t feel inclined to speak the truth. Annie is understandably hurt by the girl’s don’t-ask-don’t-tell policy, but Sirk is quick to balance the scales, subversively cutting to a shot of Lora taking Susie’s temperature. “Well, you’re practically normal,” she says as she read the thermometer.

It’s important to observe _Imitation of Life_’s stifling, mid-point rhetorical shift. As the film flashes forward a decade, the montage of marquee signs celebrate her roles in _Sweet Surrender, Happiness, Always Laughter_ and _Born to Laugh_. Lora, though, looks to branch out into dramatic acting and ditches David for a new drama with a "colored angle" called _No More Laughter_ (a self-reflexive wink on Sirk’s part to the emotional windfalls still to come). The debonair Steve is back in the picture but feels slighted once more when Lora chooses him over a budding film career. To a certain degree, Steve is a chauvinist but he also recognizes her almost sadistic ability to reject happiness at every turn.

"What you’re after isn’t real," says Steve to Lora early in the film. He acknowledges his love for her and just as they’re about to kiss, a nearby doorbell rings. She pulls away and when she draws close again, the phone inside her apartment rings. And the interruptions continue on and on. Lora seems to always look for a reason to tear away from happiness, and Sirk is more than willing to point out her pathology by repeatedly teasing her with his mise-en-scène and the film’s sound design. During the film’s especially rigorous second half, Sirk frames his characters beneath imposing edifices or shoots them in such a way that he emphasizes their emotional separation from each other (when Susie reveals to Lora that Annie has always been more of a mother, a bed pillar bisects the frame). Every object in the film also seems to point out that everyone here is always in performance mode: the drama masks on the walls of a seedy dance club that reference Sarah Jane’s tortured identity and the
sad clown paintings that decorate the whole of Lora’s home.

Every word and image in the film comes with a double meaning. "My camera could have a love affair with your face," says Steve to Lora not long after they’ve first met. This sentiment would normally come across more maudlin, but because this is a Douglas Sirk film it carries a subversive undertone. As for the pretty things the nurturing Annie loves to take care of, she’s obviously talking about more than Lora’s dainty belongings. "Oh, Annie, what would I do without you?" says a selfish Lora to her ailing maid. Sirk never questions Lora’s love for Annie but he is critical of the self-centeredness of that love. Despite Annie’s devotion to the clueless Lora and her daughter, Lora knows next to nothing about the woman. In order to emphasize this distance, Sirk also chooses to reveal next to nothing about Annie's personal life to the spectator as well. All of this makes the film’s final scenes that more emotionally wrenching.

When Lora tells Steve that she must pursue a part in an Italian director’s next film because it could be the best female role since Scarlett O'Hara. In 1940, Hattie McDaniel became the first African-American to win an Academy Award for her supporting role as Scarlett O’Hara’s Mammie in the overblown Victor Fleming epic. Sirk is obviously critical of the Lora Merediths and Scarlett O’Haras of the world, women who’ve redefined slavery inside the domestic home by reducing their "mammies" to mere emotional sounding boards. Imitation of Life ends with Moore’s Annie Johnson being dramatically hoisted into a hearse as an entire black community mourns her passing. It’s a valiant, heartbreaking moment, but if you dig beneath the scene’s giddy surface sheen, you may see that Sirk is asking for an instant moratorium on films that further subjugate the role of African-Americans in art and the world itself.

http://www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/imitation-of-life

Bosley Crowther’s 1959 review for the NY Times

[Paul – very typical review of Sirk’s films at Universal. Seen as a forced tear jerker. Not as good as the original – which was not that good either according to Crowther.]

FOR positive verification of the old French saying, "The more things change, the more they are the same," consider the new film at the Roxy. It is Universal’s "Imitation of Life."

Twenty-five years ago, a picture of the same title, based upon the then popular Fannie Hurst novel, opened at the same theatre. Its star was Claudette Colbert. It was in black-and-white. And the reviewer for this paper tagged it "the most shameless tear-jerker of the fall."

Yesterday’s arrival at the Roxy has Lana Turner as its star. It happens to be in vivid color, and a few details in the story have been changed. But otherwise this modernized remake of Miss Hurst’s frankly lachrymose tale is much the same as its
soggy predecessor. It is the most shameless tear-jerker in a couple of years.

Once more, it circulates a story of the hazards of motherhood at the stage when one’s children—in this case daughters—are growing up and preparing to enter the world.

There are two mothers in the situation—and no fathers, by the way; no parents of masculine gender to confuse the rich flow of mother love. One is a lovely young widow who aspires to a theatrical career and somewhat neglects her growing daughter in gaining great success in that field. (In the former film and in the novel, she was a tycoon in pancake flour, but the point was the same: She concentrated on a self-aggrandizing career.)

The other mother is a Negro and is the first mother’s loyal maid. She doesn’t neglect her daughter, but she has a serious problem on her hands. Her daughter is markedly light-skinned and, as she grows up, she wants to pass for white — so much so that she repudiates her mother and eventually runs away. Thus the poor woman’s heart is broken, in the midst of her employer’s lush success. The contrast of the mother’s compensations from their differing daughters is the story’s irony.

As you may sense from this outline, the emotional potentialities are strong, and no reluctance, restraint or artful prudence has been exercised in banging them across. The screen play by Eleanore Griffin and Allan Scott puts the issue positively, and, to make sure there’s no vagueness in the dialogue, it is written in basic cliches.

"Tell her I know I was selfish—and if I loved her too much, I’m sorry—but I didn’t mean to cause her any trouble. She was all I had." Thus speaks the mother on her death-bed about the daughter who ran away. That is the tenor of the writing—and the simplified feeling—in this film.

As for the Negro mother’s funeral, which is the climactic episode, it is a splurge of garish ostentation and sentimentality. Mahalia Jackson is recruited to do a full-voiced wail of "Trouble of the World," while a church is packed with principals and extras who sob noisily and dab at their eyes. And, of course, the wayward daughter who wants to be white shows up at the end and throws herself on the coffin, crying for mama piteously.

Under Douglas Sirk’s direction, which is manifested by that episode, Miss Turner and all the others act un-really and elaborately. Miss Turner as the actress, Sandra Dee as her daughter (at 16), Juanita Moore as the Negro mother, Susan Kohner as her daughter (at 18), John Gavin as a suitor of Miss Turner, Robert Alda as her agent in the theatre and Dan O’Herlihy as a doting playwright do not give an imitation of life. They give an imitation of movie acting at its less graceful level twenty-five years ago.

On the Roxy stage is "Hawaiian Holiday," starring Jack Haskell and featuring Mona
Joy, Kimo Lee, the Gaudsmith Brothers, the Roxy singers and dancers moderne.

A four-hanky masterpiece

The conflict between mothers and daughters has long been a Hollywood plot device. Sometimes it is done badly ("Divine Secrets of the Ya Ya Sisterhood"), sometimes it can be campy (the immortal shriek fest "Mommie Dearest") and sometimes a film does it really well ("Mildred Pierce"). "Imitation of Life", Douglas Sirk’s 1959 film starring Lana Turner and Juanita Moore, squarely fits into that last category.

Lora Meredith (Turner) is a young widow, a single parent and struggling actress. One day when she loses her young daughter Susie at the beach, and with the help of a photographer she encounters, Steve Archer (Gavin) she finds her with Annie Johnson (Moore), an African-American woman, and her own young daughter Sarah Jane. After Lora and Annie talk for a bit, we find that Lora is having a hard time juggling her career with having a young child, and that Annie and her daughter are newly arrived in town and do not have a place to stay, so after Annie asks to work for Lora in exchange for room and board, they strike up a close friendship, as do their daughters. The film spans about ten years, and during those ten years Lora becomes a very successful Broadway actress, and Susie is sent away to an exclusive boarding school. Meanwhile, Lora is still her loyal right-hand, having decided to continue working for Lora, even though she has been putting the money that she has earned away. Sarah Jane, however, a very light-skinned girl who is able to pass as white, cannot get past her hatred of her own race, and her embarrassment of her mother’s color and position. She is continually scheming and running away in order to rid herself of her true heritage, which ends up literally breaking her mother’s heart.

"Imitation of Life" is outwardly a very pretty film with gorgeous coloring, beautiful actors and costumes to die for. When this veneer is peeled back, however, the true nature of the film is revealed, and its conflicts are painfully apparent. Lora and Steve are clearly meant to be together, but her career repeatedly gets in the way until Steve is no longer able to sit by idly, waiting for her while realizing that he is always going to be low on her priority list. While Sarah Jane envies Lora and Susie’s looks, money and ultimately, color, it quickly becomes clear that their problems are substantial. While they had a close relationship when Susie was six, with the advent of Lora’s career, the love Lora had for Susie did not diminish, but her attention and time for her did. When Susie returns home from a break at school, it is in her mother’s absence that she latches on to Steve, (newly reunited with the family after ten years) and ultimately falls in love with him. In regard to Annie and Sarah Jane, there is nothing that the kind-hearted, completely selfless Annie can do to appease her daughter, a realization that is so hurtful that it makes her physically sick.

The great Douglas Sirk weaves all of these conflicts masterfully. Sirk, often marginalized as a “fluff piece” director due to the strong melodramatic content of his films, is at his very best with this film. "Imitation of Life" does not stray from his
other films in terms of formula: We have a conflict that is socially relevant and somewhat inflammatory, beautiful actors and actresses playing the part, rich, lush colors throughout the entire production and loads of expensive jewelry and costumes. While there are Douglas Sirk movies that I really like for their camp value ("Magnificent Obsession" immediately comes to mind), "Imitation of Life" is so much more. Just when you're about to laugh at a line or a gesture that seems really over the top, Sirk beats you to it. The best example of this is when Lora and Susie are having a fight over the fact that Susie has fallen in love with Steve, after Lora announces their intention to marry. When Lora looks directly at the camera, puts a stoic look on her face and says in her best Joan Crawford imitation, "Then I’ll give him up", Susie immediately says grimly, "Oh mother, don’t act for me." The performances by the actors are all good, particularly the Oscar-nominated performances of Moore and Kohner. Here’s a warning about the film, however – chances are, you’ll cry.

"Imitation of Life" has both beauty and substance. It is a multi-layered film wrapped up in an exquisite little package, which is often cast away as fluff, but is really so much more. Watch it and judge for yourself, but this judge gives it a solid 8/10.

--Shelly