

## Rear Window (1954) Alfred Hitchcock

P Michell, 2022.

### Synopsis:

*Recuperating from a broken leg, professional photographer L. B. "Jeff" Jefferies is (Stewart) confined to a wheelchair in his apartment in [Greenwich Village, Manhattan](#). His rear window looks out onto a courtyard and other apartments. During an intense [heat wave](#), he watches his neighbours, who keep their windows open to stay cool. They are a lonely woman whom Jeff nicknames 'Miss Lonelyhearts', a newlywed couple, a pianist, a pretty dancer nicknamed 'Miss Torso', a middle-aged couple whose small dog likes digging in the flower garden, and Lars Thorwald, a traveling costume jewelry salesman with a bedridden wife. Jeff is visited regularly by his [socialite](#) girlfriend, Lisa Fremont (Kelly), and a nurse named Stella (Ritter). One night after an argument with Lisa, Jeff is alone in his apartment and hears a woman scream, "Don't!" and the sound of breaking glass ...*

Has one of the best opening scenes – from the blinds opening to finishing on Grace Kelly. Now considered one of the best examples of ‘visual / pure cinema’. Rated on par if not greater than Vertigo as one of the great films.

Very successful on release - eighth highest grossing film of 1954.

So much great creative talent in front and behind the camera!

One of the ‘lost’ Hitchcock films for three decades.

### CREATIVE PERSONNEL

Alfred Hitchcock – Producer / Director (69 credits)

Hitchcock is justly famous as ‘the master of cinema suspense’. Began working in silent film – but it his 1950s and 1960s films beginning with this that made his name. (As well his TV show.) Rear Window is much more than a Saturday night at the movies. It’s a project that attempts to create fully controlled cinematic story telling. Building layer upon layer using the collection of ‘little movies’. Note the Hitchcock theme of using famous actors with ‘known baggage’. (This film capitalises by using Grace Kelly and James Stewart.)

Truffaut reflected on what made Hitchcock unique and concluded: "It was impossible not to see that the love scenes were filmed like murder scenes, and the murder scenes like love scenes...It occurred to me that in Hitchcock's cinema...to make love and to die are one and the same."

Not to be forgotten is the famous ‘McGuffins’. Plot device/s used to move the story along then completely abandoned. This film is full of them! (Below cage would be overstuffed!) Eg: Miss Lonelyhearts and the pills. Cute puppy in basket – how its relevance changes in the film.

Hitchcock described the MacGuffin:

Two travellers are on a train in in Scotland. One is carrying a cage. When asked what’s it for –

*Catching lions.*

*But there’s no lions in Scotland.*

*Precisely.*

(Paul’s paraphrasing.)

### Cornell Woolrich – Original Story

Prolific mystery writer. Hugely influential. A movie about Hayes's relationship with Alfred Hitchcock is being developed. His biographer, Francis Nevins Jr., rated Woolrich the fourth best crime writer of his day, behind Dashiell Hammett, Erle Stanley Gardner and Raymond Chandler. Film directors seemed to have fallen in love with his plots! Has extensive Wikipedia entry includes the many films:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornell\\_Woolrich](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cornell_Woolrich)

### John Michael Hayes - Script (31 known credits)

In 1953 was handpicked by Alfred Hitchcock to adapt Woolrich story. The collaboration would be an important turning point for both. For Hitchcock, it marked the beginning of his most successful period, critically and commercially. For Hayes, it lifted him into the world of A-list directors, stars, and budgets, and began his long association with Paramount Pictures. Hayes was given tremendous creative freedom.

Both he and Hitchcock earned Academy Award nominations for their work on Rear Window. Neither went home with Oscars, but Hayes did receive an Edgar award from the Mystery Writers of America for his screenplay. Their styles and temperaments meshed and Hayes went on to write Hitchcock's next three films -To Catch a Thief, The Trouble with Harry, and The Man Who Knew Too Much. But when Hayes successfully challenged Hitchcock over a credit dispute, the relationship came to an abrupt end.

Known as a script writer's scriptwriter. Often brought in to fix scripts. His works include Peyton Place (1957), Separate Tables (1958) (uncredited), Butterfield 8 (1960), Children's Hour (1961), Carpetbaggers (1964), Chalk Garden (1964), Judith (1966). Latter years spent in academia.

### Robert Burks - Cinematography (46 films)

Worked on 12 Hitchcock films. Considered one of the great cinematographers - working exceptionally well in colour and black and white. [Must never see faded versions of his films.]

Many well respected films including: Arsenic and Old Lace (1944), Key Largo (1948), The Fountainhead (1949), The Glass Menagerie (1950), Patch of Blue (1965).

Academy Award for Hitchcock's To Catch a Thief. Nominated for Strangers on a Train, Rear Window and A Patch of Blue. An innovator of telephoto and wide-angle shots.

Sadly, Burks and wife died in a house fire, supposedly caused by a cigarette he was smoking in bed in 1968, aged 58. Much talk that had he lived there'd be more great Hitch films.

(Though ... had a falling out with Hitch after Marnie,1964.)

IMDB contributor lists Burks as the 12<sup>th</sup> most important cinematographer.

### Franz Waxman - Composer (189 credits)

A German emigre who began his career orchestrating the score for The Blue Angel (1930). Moving to America his prolific output of scores include Bride of Frankenstein (1935), Rebecca (1940), To Have and Have Not (1944), Sunset Boulevard (1950). MGM's fanfare from 1936.

Rear Window uses mostly music that is directly connected to the location of each apartment scene. Each apartment has their own 'score'. Exception being beginning and end credits.

### Grace Kelly - Lisa Fremont (30 credits)

One of the highest rank 'Hollywood Beauties'. Grace Kelly was offered this film and "On the Waterfront" at the same time. Chose, Rear Window because she thought the role of Lisa, who worked in the world of fashion, as she once did, suited her better. Noted films include High Society (1956), Dial M for Murder (1954). Left the industry after High Society to become Princess Grace of Monaco. Her family was wealthy and she brought two million dollar dowry to her wedding. Which was her inheritance. Her movies were banned in Monaco.

### James Stewart – L B Jeffries (102 credits)

Quintessential Hollywood actor of the Golden Age. All round actor including westerns, dramas and screwball comedies. Was in air pilot and reserve after WWII. Achieved rank of Brigadier General. BSc in Architecture from Princeton in 1932.

Has stated that of the four movies he made with Sir [Alfred Hitchcock](#), this one is his personal favourite. His character is confined to a wheelchair throughout the film. [Raymond Burr](#), the villain, went on to play the title role in TV's [Ironside](#) (1967), the chief of police who ... is confined to a wheelchair.

### Thelma Ritter – Stella (43 credits)

Known for her comedic roles and working class New York accent. During her career, Ritter was nominated for an [Oscar](#) six times. In 1955, Ritter co-hosted the Oscar ceremony, notably trading wisecracks with [Bob Hope](#).

### Raymond Burr – Lars Thorwald (146 credits)

Busy actor in 1940s and 1950s before working mostly in television.

Famous for the TV roles of ... Perry Mason and Ironside. Trivia – biography at the time hid his homosexuality in the guise of wives and children. Very successful life out of film including – orchid raising.

### Few Other 'Major' McGuffins

Suspected 'murder' committed by apartment tenant and traveling salesman Lars Thorwald.

Lingering question: what happened to her?

Circumstantial evidence that was slowly pieced together (repeated a few times):

- (a saw and butcher knife wrapped in newspaper
- the moving of a heavy trunk
- the removal of jewelry from the wife's handbag
- a strangled dog that had snooped in the courtyard's garden, etc.

### Trivia

The original story by [Cornell Woolrich](#) had no love story and no additional neighbours for L.B. Jefferies to spy on; those elements were created by Sir [Alfred Hitchcock](#) and [John Michael Hayes](#). Hayes was encouraged by Hitchcock to spend time with [Grace Kelly](#) before writing the Lisa character, and Hayes admitted that elements of Lisa were inspired by the actress.

This movie was shot on a specially constructed set that took fifty men two months to build, and cost somewhere between \$75,000 and \$100,000. In order to get the scale right, the soundstage floor had to be removed so the courtyard could be built in a former storage space in the basement. Therefore, Jeff's apartment, which appears to be on the second floor, was actually at street level. The set included thirty-one apartments, of which twelve were fully

furnished. The whole thing became a marvel that visitors to the studio were eager to see, and it was featured in magazine spreads while shooting was still in progress.

This movie was unavailable for three decades because its rights (together with four other movies of the same period) were bought back by Sir [Alfred Hitchcock](#), and left as part of his legacy to his daughter. They've been known for long as the infamous "Five Lost Hitchcocks" amongst movie buffs, and were re-released in theaters around 1984 after a thirty-year absence. The others are [The Man Who Knew Too Much](#) (1956), [Rope](#) (1948), [The Trouble with Harry](#) (1955), and [Vertigo](#) (1958). However, prior to the theatrical re-releases in the 1980s, this movie was televised once, in 1971, on ABC, although the network technically did not have the legal right to do so.

The set had to have four lighting set-ups always in place for various times of the day. Remote switches located in Jeff's apartment controlled the lighting. Virtually every piece of lighting that wasn't employed on another Paramount Pictures movie had to be used (by some counts, one thousand huge arc lights and two thousand smaller ones). At one point, the lights caused the sprinkler system to go off, which shut everything down, and plunged the set into total darkness. Sir [Alfred Hitchcock](#) calmly told an assistant to bring him an umbrella and let him know when the "rain" had stopped.

Two main cameras were used to film it. One was the camera used in [James Stewart's](#) apartment behind from which [Alfred Hitchcock](#) directed. The other main camera was mounted on a crane to film just outside the windows for scenes when Stewart is watching through binoculars or a telephoto lens. To synchronize with the actions on the immediate set, Hitchcock gave directions to the actors in the remote apartments via radio.

According to [Georgine Darcy](#), the man and woman on the fire escape struggling to get out of the rain was based on a prank by Sir [Alfred Hitchcock](#). Each actor and actress in the apartment complex facing Jeff's rear window wore an earpiece through which they could receive Hitchcock's directions. Hitchcock told the man to pull the mattress in one direction and told the woman to pull in the opposite direction. Unaware that they had received conflicting directions, the couple began to fight and struggle to get the mattress inside once the crew began filming. The resulting mayhem, in which one of the couple is tossed inside the window with the mattress, provided humour and a sense of authenticity, which Hitchcock liked. He was so pleased with the result that he did not order another take.

## Analysis

*... for all his desperate desire to devour the little movies that are being displayed to him in the many rear windows we can see Jeff in fact misses a lot of the action of this film that is made accessible to us (more eager still than he to see stories played out) because he keeps dozing, is generally accounted to the torpor evidenced by that early shot of the thermometer reading 93°. The heat apparently makes him drowsy; the drowsiness makes him miss scenes; that he misses scenes leads him to misdiagnose, and also to work with new feverishness in his diagnosis, frantic to put together in a cinematic way the shards of narrative left available to his waking mind.*

*Truffault - One of the things I enjoyed in the film was the dual significance of that wedding ring. Grace Kelly wants to get married but James Stewart doesn't see it that way. She breaks*

*into the killer's apartment to search for evidence and she finds the wedding ring. She puts it on her finger and waves her hand behind her back so that James Stewart, looking over from the other side of the yard with his spyglasses, can see it. To Grace Kelly, that ring is a double victory: not only is it the evidence she was looking for, but who knows, it may inspire Stewart to propose to her. After all, she's already got the ring!*

Ex Pomerance – Recuperation and Rear Window, Senses of Cinema, Dec 2003  
[https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2003/feature-articles/rear\\_window/](https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2003/feature-articles/rear_window/)

*70 years on - At the time, anyone labelled a voyeur was usually assumed to have psychological issues. But with the advent of technology and smartphones in particular, voyeurism has become normalized in mainstream culture.*

Terrific interview (no date) with John Michael Hayes's experience on the film - scriptwriter. He 'invented' the Grace Kelly part. Includes various YouTube links, photos of the set. Link to original script – if so desired! The clip 'Hitchcock's Techniques' has many references to Rear Window.

<https://cinephiliabeyond.org/rear-window-hitchcocks-cinematic-exploration-voyeurism-disguised-top-notch-thriller/>

## REVIEWS

### A Masterpiece Of Visual Cinema & Sound Design

Tynan Yanaga, APRIL 3, 2018 (filminquiry.com)

There are such a vast number of planes to appreciate *Rear Window* on and one of those is its impeccable use of sound as well as a score courtesy of **Franz Waxman**. In fact, it is quite easy to consider it as a film with a wholly diegetic soundtrack but, in reality, it's really an intricate weaving of sound orchestration playing against the images onscreen. For instance, against the credits, as the blinds come up, we're met with the playfully cool jazzy beats of "Prelude and Radio" which proves to be in perfect juxtaposition with the deathly hot heatwave hitting Greenwich Village in the film's opening moments.

We're also inundated with all types of songs popular and otherwise which can be picked out of the story organically if you're paying particular attention. Two of the most obvious additions are "That's Amore" and then "Mona Lisa" which can be heard being sung by a group of party guests.

Whether or not it's a slight nod to our heroine Lisa (**Grace Kelly**) is up for debate but it's also notable that she, in essence, receives her own theme song which is concurrently composed by the songwriter who lives in the courtyard that we come to know over the course of the film. It slowly evolves from its nascent stages into a full-fledged tune that gains its wings once the romance between Lisa and our protagonist L.B. Jefferies (**James Stewart**) has come into its own.

## PURE CINEMA

Obviously, beyond the elements of soundtrack, *Rear Window* develops into an immersive world and **Alfred Hitchcock** expertly inserts us directly into the environment to the extent that we have no choice but to become involved in the whole ordeal. We are accomplices, if you will, in this viewing party of **Jimmy Stewart's**.

It truly is an exhibition in the moving image because the film works so brilliantly with them. Certainly, it begins with the staging and the complex setup **Hitchcock** had to work with at Paramount Studios but there's simultaneously the use of color cinematography, the lighting of the stages which sets the scene given the time of day, and common street noise that lends an almost imperceptible authenticity that we easily take for granted.

Furthermore, working with his long trusted cinematographer **Robert Burks**, you see **Hitchcock** moving so fluidly and with so much purpose through the playground provided him. The camera captures objects with clear intention and a crispness that is far from simply giving us the illusion of being in the space, making us feel like we are actually right there with Stewart looking out into the courtyard.

You also get the true essence of what visual filmmaking is because his powers of suggestion and even persuasion of the audience are impressed upon us by what he deems important. **Hitchcock** lays out nearly all of **Stewart's** backstory, not with clunky expositional dialogue but by giving us a wordless parade of his apartment while our protagonist sleeps. And the whole picture is a constant rhythmic cadence of being fed images followed by **Stewart's** reaction shots. It's film at its primacy. Where two images put together are blessed with so much more meaning and suggestion than they could ever have standing alone (if you want to get technical it's called the Kuleshov Effect).

But far from simply marveling at what **Hitch** has accomplished, it's far more miraculous that we become so enveloped in this story. It's an admirable plot chock full of tension that's built up over time and successive shifts in perception, time of day and personnel moving in and out of the complex. Our one commonality is **Stewart** stuck in that wheelchair with only his broken leg, his camera, and the neighbors to keep him entertained. They do far more than that.

## CONFINED THRILLS

*Rear Window's* A-Plot is a harrowing mystery thriller that we watch unfold with a systematic unraveling that's unnerving in part because **Hitchcock** has orchestrated it all in a limited space. Furthermore, he has handicapped his protagonist and the outsiders coming in are constantly causing us to second guess or reevaluate our assumptions, be they the insurance agency nurse Stella (**Thelma Ritter**), Jefferies' policeman chum (**Wendell Corey**), or his best girl Lisa. Each character is at one point in opposition to Jefferies while also providing a sounding board for his cockamamie theories which start to bear the grain of truth. We get to be a part of it all.

The utter irony is that once more not only is **Hitchcock's** villain atypical – in nearly all areas a seemingly unspectacular man – he's also quite overtly styled after **David O. Selznick**. If you know anything about the producer he shares some resemblance with **Raymond Burr** and

there's no denying that **Hitchcock** was never fond of the other's meddling. As much as I love *Rebecca* (1940) and his earlier American works, if *Rear Window* was a representation of the hands-off approach to his filmmaking than I would have to side with him.

At least by this point in his career, there's no denying that he projected a singular vision that could hardly be quelled by any individual. This is "Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*," after all, as the opening credits proclaim. However, the beauty of this picture is that it truly does stand up to multiple viewings and every repeated viewing offers up new depths, or at least minor revelations, that add an even greater relish to the experience.

## WINDOWS INTO ROMANCE

In particular, are the underlining themes of romance. This is a film about love in all of its many facets, with each character or couple reflecting a certain permutation of what romantic love looks like.

The love stories are playing out in each compartment of the apartment complex. Miss Torso (**Georgine Darcy**), the queen bee with the pick of the drones. She's very much eye candy but in the final frames, we realize there's more to her as her love comes back home from the army. There's Miss Lonelyhearts (**Judith Evelyn**) who is desperately seeking affection and yet has enough respect not to stoop below her dignity. It's a song that lifts her out of her despair. The Newlyweds are still in the honeymoon phase and we never see them.

Meanwhile, you have Stella providing her homespun philosophy that people shouldn't overanalyze their situation. Jefferies is pushing back against any serious romance because in his estimation Lisa is far too perfect for him. Meanwhile, Lisa is left believing she can live in any world that Jeff is in.

But for the threads to be resolved, they must become fully intertwined with the murder at the film's core because such an event calls for a response from our characters – at least our main ones. When Lisa sacrifices so much to show her love and devotion to him, Jefferies realizes how much he misjudged her character and, perhaps more profoundly, how dearly he loves her. He has made the transition from armchair philosopher and misanthrope to a man smitten with someone else. As long as he ditches the window watching he should be fine.

## LOVING THY NEIGHBOR

That leads us to another area of discussion. There's a bit of a moral commentary present though **Hitchcock** doesn't seem all that interested in those conclusions per se as much as he likes manipulating them for the sake of his drama. And yet, like *Vertigo* four years later, there is this unnerving sense that he is tapping into some of humanity's darkest desires to watch and spy on others for pleasure without any consequence or any vulnerability on the part of the peeper.

That draws me to this other aspect of the film that I've never really considered. *Rear Window* implicitly asks what it is to be a neighbor or at least what it is to live with neighbors. There's very little in the realm of actual judgments except for the small condemnation that comes from the woman who lives just above the murderer after her yippy dog has been killed. What does she say?

*“You don’t know the meaning of the word ‘neighbors’! Neighbors like each other, speak to each other, care if somebody lives or dies! But None of You Do!”*

What she provides is a heartfelt and searing indictment which is nevertheless lost in all the commotion, whether it’s the big party going on across the way or the realization by our heroes that their theories about murder have been all but confirmed. In a matter of moments, we’re onto the next diversion. However, it did make me consider even briefly that if the so-called Great Commandment is to “Love Thy Neighbor,” what would that look like in this context?

## IN CONCLUSION

Far from peering in at other people and staying anonymous, it seems like it involves reaching out to others. That entails being vulnerable and candid – transparent even – so others feel comfortable entering into your life. Like Stella says, sometimes people need to go on the outside and look in for a change. If nothing else that breeds empathy.

Of course, if that was the case, there would probably have been no murder and that’s what we want right? Well, anyways, *Rear Window* still stands as my favourite **Hitchcock** picture and one of the most clinical and compelling thrillers of all time. But you probably already knew that. If you did not, I implore you to break both your legs if need be, lock yourself in a room, and force yourself to watch it right this minute.

**Roger Ebert, February 2020.**  
(rogerebert.com)

The hero of Alfred Hitchcock's "Rear Window" is trapped in a wheelchair, and we're trapped, too--trapped inside his point of view, inside his lack of freedom and his limited options. When he passes his long days and nights by shamelessly maintaining a secret watch on his neighbors, we share his obsession. It's wrong, we know, to spy on others, but after all, aren't we always voyeurs when we go to the movies? Here's a film about a man who does on the screen what we do in the audience--look through a lens at the private lives of strangers.

The man is a famous photographer named L.B. Jeffries--"Jeff" to his fiancée. He's played by [James Stewart](#) as a man of action who has been laid up with a broken leg and a heavy cast that runs all the way up to his hip. He never leaves his apartment and has only two regular visitors. One is his visiting nurse Stella ([Thelma Ritter](#)), who predicts trouble ("the New York State sentence for a Peeping Tom is six months in the workhouse"). The other is his fiancée, Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly), an elegant model and dress designer, who despairs of ever getting him to commit himself. He would rather look at the lives of others than live inside his own skin, and Stella lectures him, "What people ought to do is get outside their own house and look in for a change."

Jeff's apartment window shares a courtyard with many other windows (all built on a single set by Hitchcock), and as the days pass he becomes familiar with some of the other tenants. There is Miss Lonelyhearts, who throws dinner parties for imaginary gentleman callers; and Miss Torso, who throws drinks parties for several guys at a time; and a couple who lower their beloved little dog in a basket to the garden, and a composer who fears his career is going



nowhere. And there is Thorvald ([Raymond Burr](#)), a man with a wife who spends all her days in bed and makes life miserable for him. One day the wife is no longer to be seen, and by piecing together several clues (a saw, a suitcase, a newly dug spot in Thorvald's courtyard garden), Jeff begins to suspect that a murder has taken place.

The way he determines this illustrates the method of the movie. Rarely has any film so boldly presented its methods in plain view. Jeff sits in his wheelchair, holding a camera with a telephoto lens, and looks first here and then there, like a movie camera would. What he sees, we see. What conclusions he draws, we draw--all without words, because the pictures add up to a montage of suspicion.

In the earliest days of cinema, the Russian director Kuleshov performed a famous experiment in which he juxtaposed identical shots of a man's face with other shots. When the man was matched with food, audiences said the man looked hungry, and so on. The shots were neutral. The montage gave them meaning. "Rear Window" (1954) is like a feature-length demonstration of the same principle, in which the shots assembled in Jeff's mind add up to murder.

I sometimes fancy that various archetypal situations circled tirelessly in Hitchcock's mind, like whales in a tank at the zoo. One of them was fascination of voyeurism--of watching people who do not know they are being watched. Another, famously, was the notion of an innocent man wrongly accused. And many of his films illustrate male impotence or indifference in the face of cool blond beauty. Much is said of Hitchcock's blonds ([Kim Novak](#), [Eva Marie Saint](#), [Grace Kelly](#), [Tippi Hedren](#)), but observe that they are not erotic playmates so much as puzzles or threats. Lisa, the Kelly character, has a hopeless love for Jeff, who keeps her at arm's length with descriptions of his lifestyle; a fashion model wouldn't hold up in the desert or jungle, he tells her.

But perhaps his real reason for keeping her away is fear of impotence, symbolized by the leg cast, and we are reminded of the strikingly similar relationship between Scotty, the Stewart character in "[Vertigo](#)," and the fashion illustrator played by Barbara Bel Geddes. She, too, loves him. He keeps his distance. She sympathizes with his vertigo, as Kelly nurses the broken leg. Both observe his voyeuristic obsessions. In "Vertigo," Scotty falls in love with a woman he has spied upon but never spoken to. In "Rear Window," he is in love with the occupation of photography, and becomes completely absorbed in reconstructing the images he has seen through his lens. He wants what he can spy at a distance, not what he can hold in his arms.

Stewart is an interesting choice to play these characters. In the 1930s and 1940s he played in light comedy, romances, crime stories and Westerns, almost always as a character we liked. After the war, he revealed a dark side in the fantasy scenes of Capra's "[It's a Wonderful Life](#)," and Hitchcock exploited that side, distant and cold, in "[Rope](#)," "The Man Who Knew Too Much," "Vertigo" and "Rear Window." To understand the curious impact of these roles, consider [Tom Hanks](#), whose everyman appeal is often compared to Jimmy Stewart's. What would it feel like to see him in a bizarre and twisted light?

In "Rear Window," Jeff is not a moralist, a policeman or a do-gooder, but a man who likes to look. There are crucial moments in the film where he is clearly required to act, and he delays, not because he doesn't care what happens, but because he forgets he can be an active player; he is absorbed in a passive role. Significantly, at the end, when he is in danger in his own

apartment, his weapon is his camera's flashgun; he hopes to blind or dazzle his enemy, and as the man's eyesight gradually returns, it is through a blood-red dissolve that suggests passion expressed through the eyes.

Kelly is cool and elegant here, and has some scenes where we feel her real hurt. She likes to wear beautiful dresses, make great entrances, spoil Jeff with champagne and catered dinners. He doesn't notice or doesn't like her attention, because it presumes a relationship he wants to elude. There is one shot, partly a point-of-view closeup, in which she leans over him to kiss him, and the camera succumbs to her sexuality even if Jeff doesn't; it's as if she's begging the audience to end its obsession with what Jeff is watching, and consider instead what he *should* be drinking in with his eyes--her beauty.

The remote-control suspense scenes in "Rear Window" are Hitchcock at his most diabolical, creating dangerous situations and then letting Lisa and Stella linger in them through Jeff's carelessness or inaction. He stays in his wheelchair. They venture out into danger--Kelly even entering the apartment of the suspected wife killer. He watches. We see danger approaching. We, and he, cannot move, cannot sound the alarm.

This level of danger and suspense is so far elevated above the cheap thrills of the modern slasher films that "Rear Window," intended as entertainment in 1954, is now revealed as art. Hitchcock long ago explained the difference between surprise and suspense. A bomb under a table goes off, and that's surprise. We know the bomb is under the table but not when it will go off, and that's suspense. Modern slasher films depend on danger that leaps unexpectedly out of the shadows. Surprise. And surprise that quickly dissipates, giving us a momentary rush but not satisfaction. "Rear Window" lovingly invests in suspense all through the film, banking it in our memory, so that when the final payoff arrives, the whole film has been the thriller equivalent of foreplay.