Rear Window

Directed by.
Alfred Hitchcock

Screenplay by.
John Michael Hayes
Rear Window

• Filmed in 1954.
• Starring: James Stewart, Grace Kelly, Wendell Corey, and Thelma Ritter.
• Directed by: Alfred Hitchcock.
• Earned four Oscar nominations.
About the Director

- Alfred Hitchcock – “Master of Suspense”
- Biography (3mins) video & Life and Times of Hitchcock (4mins)
  - Born in London on August 13, 1899.
  - Created more than 50 films.
    - Rear Window, Psycho, Birds, and Vertigo
  - Combined humor and suspense.
  - Hitchcock made many cameos in his films.
  - Believed to be one of Hollywood’s most influential directors.
Rear Window – Synopsis

• Based upon Cornell Woolrich’s short story, *It Had to Be Murder*.
  – The protagonist (James Stewart), a camera reporter confined to a wheelchair with a broken leg, watches tenants from adjacent apartments through his rear window.
  – Through his point of view, his voyeuristic surveillance follows a musician, a dancer, a lonely middle-aged woman, a distraught married couple, newlyweds, an older couple, and a sculptor.
    • He speculates a possible murder has occurred.
It Had to be Murder vs. Rear Window

• Short Story:
  – L.B. Jefferies’ occupation is unknown.
  – Lisa is not in the story.
  – Stella is not in the story.
  – Sam is L.B.’s assistant, and is a combination of Lisa and Stella.
  – There is no dog or flowers in the story.
  – Det. Boyle (Doyle) searches Mr. Thorwald’s home.
  – L.B.’s broken leg is not revealed until last line.

• Film:
  – L.B. Jefferies is a photographer.
  – Lisa is L.B.’s girlfriend.
  – Lisa and Stella are replacement characters for Sam.
  – The dog and flowers are added to increase suspicion.
  – Det. Doyle did not search Mr. Thorwald’s home, because he needed a warrant.
  – L.B.’s broken leg is explained in the beginning of the film.
Rear Window Themes

• Voyeurism: spying on people.
• Marriage: gender roles, martial traditions, and martial expectations.
• Human Responsibility: responsibilities to neighbors, loved-ones, and strangers.
Point of View

• *It Had to Be Murder*: written in 1st person POV.

• Rear Window: 1st person POV of Jeff through the camera lens, binoculars, and camera angles/perspective.
  – 3rd person POV: allows the audience to see what L.B. cannot see.
Cinematic Narration

- Films typically do not use the same narrative techniques that literature uses.
  - While literature uses written language to illustrate a story, film uses camera angles and diegetic and non-diegetic sound to tell its story.
Camera Angles and Shots

• Extreme Close-ups:
  – Emphasizes emotion and importance.

• Panning, titling, and zooming:
  – Follows characters in single-runs of camera.

• Long Shots or single-runs of camera:
  – Creates suspense.
  – More realistic.
Film Sound

- Diegetic sound comes from inside the story space.
  - Voices of characters.
  - Sounds made by objects in the story.
    - For example, the musician plays the piano throughout the film.
  - Music represented as coming from instruments in the story.
Film Sound

• Non-diegetic sound comes from outside the story space.
  – Narrator’s commentary.
  – Sound effects which have been added (later) for dramatic effect.
  – Mood music and soundtrack.
Film Sound in *Rear Window*

- All of the sound in the film is diegetic, meaning that all the music, speech and other sounds all come from within the world of the film.
  - With the exception of non-diegetic orchestral music heard in the first three shots of the film.
The Setting, *It Had to Be Murder*

- “In that one, frontal vision came back full-depth, since it stood right angles to the rest, my own included, sealing up the inner hollow all these houses backed on. I could see into it, from the rounded projection of my bay window, as freely as into a doll house with its rear wall sliced away. And scaled down to about the same size” (Woolrich).
The Set

• *Rear Window* was filmed entirely on a man-made set at Paramount Studios. It cost $75,000-$100,000 to build.

• The very realistic courtyard composed of 32 apartments, which were completely furnished (running water/furniture), at a non-existent address, 125 W. 9th Street Manhattan.
The Set

- The set was similar to New York City’s Greenwich Village apartments.
- It was the largest indoor set ever built, measuring 98 feet wide, 185 feet long, and 40 feet high.
- Watch a time elapse of the Rear Window’s set.
The Set - Lighting

• Over 1000 arc lights were used to create sunlight.
  – Turning day to night could be done in 45 minutes.
More Set photos
Characters

• Jeff “L.B.” Jefferies

• Lisa Fremont
  – Do you recognize her?
Characters

• Songwriter

• Sculptor

• Miss Torso
Characters

• Det. Doyle

• Nurse Stella
Characters

- Mr. and Mrs. Thorwald
- Newlyweds
Characters

• Miss Lonelyhearts

• Elderly couple on Fire Escape
Credits

• Ranked #42 on the American Film Institute 100 Greatest Films.