

HYDE PARK

Got something to share with fellow Democrats?
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Occasional Virtual Soap Box

December 31, 2021

In the previous issue of *Hyde Park*, I said you would hear from me next in 2022. As Ron Ziegler, Richard Nixon's press secretary, used to say: "That statement is no longer operative." Several of Jewel's friends suggested I write something about *New Year's Eve* movies to complement what I said last time about *Christmas* movies. That would make sense only if I released the issue before New Year's Eve, right?

It won't be exactly the same, of course, because only two movies I personally know of (I'm sure there are others) focus on that particular day. One is a *Charlie Brown* special, and the other (titled *New Year's Eve*) I've never seen. When people speak of "*New Year's Eve*" movies, though, they usually have in mind one of two things. One is a movie one would like to watch while snuggling with a loved one on *New Year's*

Eve, the other a movie in which at least one key scene occurs on *New Year's Eve*.

The two aren't mutually exclusive, obviously, but I've chosen to focus on the latter. No particular order, but I'll start with *After the Thin Man*. This is the second of six films featuring characters created by Dashiell Hammett: Nick Charles, a semi-retired private detective played by William Powell; and Nora Charles, his wealthy wife, played by Myrna Loy.



Nora, Asta, and Nick

Wayne's blog: <https://looking4light.com/scarab/>.

Back issues of *Hyde Park* can be found there.

Note

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The original novel and the first movie in the series are titled *The Thin Man*. The title is misleading because it refers, not to the detective, but to the first of several murder victims. *After the Thin Man* is simply the second movie in the series, all of which contain to the phrase “the Thin Man” in the title.

The movie opens with Nick and Nora returning on *New Year's Eve* to their home in *Los Angeles* after having spent *Christmas* in *New York*. They find their house full of strangers pretending to know Nick and Nora Charles, celebrating the holiday by eating their food and drinking their booze. Nick and Nora are themselves world class drinkers. In reality they would both have been dead from liver disease before the third movie began. Before this movie ends, they've untangled several long-standing mysteries and solved a couple of murders.

The plots of these movies are interesting, but what people really care about is the characters. Speaking of characters, by the way, one of the characters in *After the Thin Man* is played by Jimmy Stewart in one of his earliest screen roles.



Some years back Jewel and I began our tradition of spending *New Year's Eve* at home instead of going out to parties. That first evening we watched a *Thin Man* marathon, toasting the good parts with champagne. Not long afterward our daughter and son-in-law adopted two cats, naming them “Nick” and “Nora.”



One of the all-time great “chick flicks” is *An Affair to Remember*, starring Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr. Grant plays Nickie Ferrante, a well-known playboy; Kerr plays Terry McKay. Though each is involved with someone else, they develop a brief shipboard romance, which culminates with a kiss on *New Year's Eve*. They agree to meet in six months at the top of the *Empire State Building*.

Nikki shows up, but Terry is badly injured while crossing the street on the way. She loses the use of her legs. Nikki naturally assumes that he's been dissed. Terri is too embarrassed/prideful to contact him and explain. Six months further on, however, he finds her and visits. The final scene is a tears of happiness heart-wrencher for the sentimental.



A scene in Sleepless in Seattle where Sally Albright and her friend Becky (played by Rosie O'Donnell) have a good cry while watching An Affair to Remember.

Speaking of which.... Another great chick flick is *Sleepless in Seattle*, starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. Elements of *An Affair to Remember* are woven throughout *Sleepless*. Architect Sam Baldwin, having lost his wife Maggie to cancer, moves with his eight-year-old son Jonah to *Seattle*. Late one night Jonah calls in to a nationwide advice to the lovelorn radio show to ask for help for his lonely dad.



Writer Annie Reed, though engaged to good-hearted hypochondriac Walter Jackson (played by Bill Pullman), becomes obsessed with the story, eventually flying all the way from *New York* to *Seattle*. They fail to connect of course. Gimme a break! You didn't think it was going to be that easy, did you? But all is eventually resolved on *New Year's Eve* on the observation deck of the *Empire State Building*.

Speaking of radio, let's go to Woody Allen's *Radio Days*. Hold on for a moment! I know that, as a person, Woody Allen is a despicable creep. But he's a creep who's made some terrific movies. You do hear his voice in this movie, but you never have to look at him.



Actor/playwright Wallace Shawn, who provides the voice of "The Masked Avenger."

The movie is a nostalgia trip, set during *WW II*, when radio ruled the airwaves. The narrator weaves together stories of his own family with stories about the stars of various radio shows. The movie begins when two men answer the phone in a house they are in process of burgling. The call is from the host

of a name that tune-type radio quiz show. The guys answer all the questions, winning a grand prize—which is delivered the next day to the house they’ve just finished burgling.

Episode follows episode, including Mr. Needleman running down the street in his underwear waving a cleaver, a *Nazi* submarine, a secret decoder ring, Orson Welles’s *War of the Worlds* broadcast, and the mother of a mob hitman convincing her son not to kill Sally White (Mia Farrow) because she’s too stupid to rat him out. It concludes with the narrator’s family gathered in their living room listening to the radio while the stars of the various radio shows gather on the roof of their building to watch the new year come in.

This is getting tedious, I’m sure, so I’ll end with just two more, starting with *Bridget Jones’s Diary*. There’s a bit of a gimmick here in that events of the plot roughly parallel those of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. The actor who played the role of Darcy in one of the best known dramatizations of Austen’s book is Colin Firth, and the character he plays here is also named Darcy. Bridget Jones is played by Renée Zellweger, who put on a lot of weight for the role; Darcy’s rival, Daniel Cleaver, is played by Hugh Grant.

Bridget and Darcy meet at a *New Year’s Eve* party, where she makes fun of his *Christmas* sweater. As he is leaving, she hears him describe her as “a verbally incontinent spinster who smokes like a chimney, drinks like a fish, and dresses like her mother.” She resolves to straighten up and get her life together.

Lots of the kind of fun things you would expect along the way, including Bridget’s showing up dressed as a *Playboy* bunny for a hoity-toity affair she’d been told was a costume party. The movie ends with Bridget and Darcy sharing a passionate kiss while standing in the middle of a snow covered street.



Finally I’ll bring Meg Ryan back for *When Harry Met Sally*, the movie which answers the question whether men and women can really be friends. The movie opens with Harry Burns and Sally Albright, who’ve just graduated from *The University of Chicago*, sharing a ride back to *New York*. As time goes by, Harry gets married and Sally moves in with a man to whom she is either engaged or engaged-to-be-engaged (I forget which). Both get dumped and soon become friends with each other.

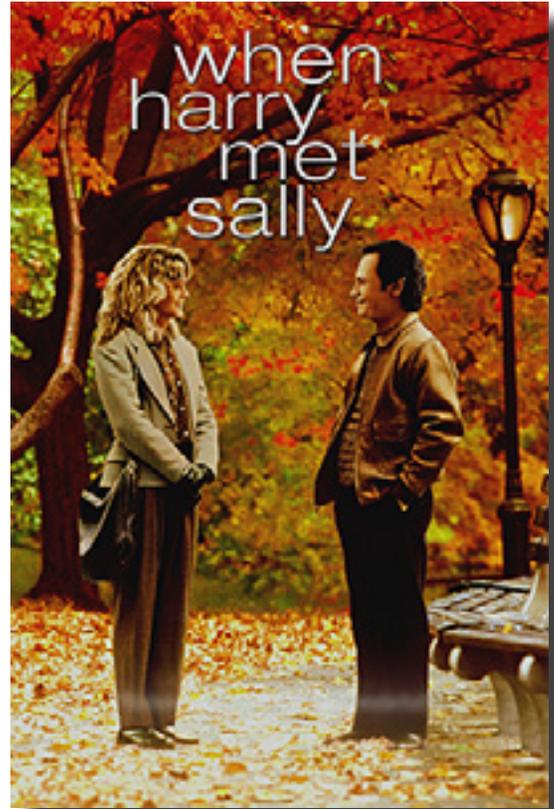
A favorite episode for many occurs when the two are arguing about whether a man can tell when a woman fakes an orgasm. Sally says no and she supports her point by faking an orgasm while the two are sharing a casual lunch in *Katz’s Delicatessen*. A waitress asks a nearby

patron what she'd like to order. The patron (played by director Rob Reiner's mother), says, "I'll have what she's having!"



(Nostalgia trip for *DeLandites*: Nick Bellini, and Scott after him, kept a photo on the wall of *Bellini's* showing Nick when he worked at *Katz's*. Yeah. An *Italian* guy learning the trade at a *Jewish* delicatessen. So it goes!)

It takes a while, but eventually they do have sex with one another—an experience that ends disastrously. Harry tries everything he can to win Sally back, but she treats him as if he were a fish left to rot in the sun for three days. They do eventually reconcile, of course, and they do so in what's arguably the best *New Year's Eve* scene in the movies.



When Harry Met Sally is worth seeing just for the gorgeous cinematography provided by DP Barry Sonnenfeld and the music, provided in part by Harry Connick, Jr.

Feature

Republican politicians & hypocrisy

Wayne Dickson

J.D. Vance, again, decides not to run for Ohio U.S. Senate seat

Updated: Jan. 30, 2019, 1:06 p.m. | Published: Jan. 19, 2018, 5:02 p.m.



Could his on again-off again decision have anything to do with his having been busted for his hypocrisy?



Your daily update from Salon.

Your daily update from *Salon*. Written by Brett Bachman.

12-17-21

J.D. Vance's Walmart hypocrisy

J.D. Vance, the best-selling author and venture capitalist running for *U.S. Senate* in *Ohio*, has taken to bashing *Walmart* while on the campaign trail. The *Republican* hopeful accuses the retail giant of using “slave labor” and contributing to the country’s over-reliance on *China*. He even blames the company for a wave of “woke” corporate posturing and a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion — all things he sees as corrupting forces in *American* life.

But his financial disclosures tell a different story.

Vance’s most recent paperwork — submitted late — shows he bought between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in *Walmart* stock recently.

He didn’t respond to our request for comment, but Brad Bainum, a spokesperson for the *Democratic* super PAC *American Bridge 21st Century*, summed up the opposing view quite succinctly: “J.D. Vance keeps proving that he’s an untrustworthy fraud.”

Feature

Only we can do that to our fellow Americans!

Wayne Dickson

Do you remember this scene from the 1978 movie *Animal House*, where two *Deltas* see the leader of a rival fraternity bullying one of their pledges? I can't help thinking about it every time I see or hear a *QAMAGA* politician pull autocratic stunts on the pretext of protecting people from supposedly autocratic *Democrats*.



Here's an **example** of what I mean:

'Legal terrorism': GOP AG blasted for threatening to sue if schools take any steps to prevent COVID spread

Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt is threatening legal action over implementation of any COVID mitigation actions, including masks, social distancing, and directing those with or who have been exposed to the deadly virus to quarantine.



Schmitt, a 46-year old *Republican* who is also running for the *U.S. Senate*, "isn't just threatening health officials, but bullying schools with terrifying social-media scare tactics," *The Daily Beast* reports. He is also "launching another campaign asking parents across the state to snitch on schools that still had mask mandates or other COVID-19 protocols."

The *Kansas City Star* reports Schmitt "embarked on a sweeping public pressure campaign against health and education leaders that some officials liken to a form of legal terrorism."