



Film Programs



Ball of Fire: Barbara Stanwyck Centennial

July 6, 2007 - July 31, 2007



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"Thank God I wasn't an ingenue. That would have killed me," Barbara Stanwyck said, reflecting late in life on her early career in Hollywood. Anything but ingenuous, Stanwyck (1907–1990) was the screen archetype of the independent woman with her wits about her, alert and often on the make. Born Ruby Stevens in Flatbush and orphaned early, she started working as a chorus girl at age fifteen; by 1930 she had embarked on a film career that ran from scandalous pre-Code sagas and "women's weepies" through noirs, smart-mouthed comedies, and whip-cracking Westerns (after retiring from the big screen, she was the memorable matriarch of TV's *Big Valley*). The movies made the most of her tough-broad-from-Brooklyn persona, but her performances also convey a certain reserve and a private tenderness, her vigor and slangy vivacity tempered by the ambivalence that comes with knowledge. Douglas Sirk, with whom she made a devastating pair of 1950s melodramas, called her "more expressive than any actress I ever worked with. . . . She had depth as a person.

Ladies They Talk About, July 31

There is this amazing tragic stillness about her, and there is nothing the least bit phony. She isn't capable of phony." Our centennial tribute showcases the very real qualities of this extraordinary actress: the knowing precision of glance and gesture, the husky voice that deepened with time and smoke—and then there were those legs. . . . But why try to itemize her attributes? As Stanwyck said, "What the hell. Whatever I had, it worked, didn't it?"

Juliet Clark
Editor