

Screwball comedies is a subgenre of comedy that were made from the 1930's up until the early 1980's in America. The term "screwball" was a term used in the 30's, which came from baseball, to call someone who is "eccentric", considering the person has a "screw loose".

Screwball Comedies first came out it was during The Great Depression. During the time era one of the common archetypes seen is a character that goes through some form hardship, and the other one who is well off in comparison. The latter usually consisted of a character down in their luck financially, take some Charlie Chaplin and Shirley Temple movies as examples. That commonality was because a lot of those movies were commentaries on social class. In some of those movies, such as *My Man Godfrey*, they do show such characters, take the main characters as examples, Godfrey Park, a "forgotten man" ( a term used for the neglected homeless people in the era), and Irene Bullock, who is a kind hearted socialite. (Unlike her sister Angelica, who is mean and snarky) They meet when both Irene and Angelica were required to bring a forgotten man as part of scavenger hunt that the family plays. Before and after accepting the offer of going back to their home Godfrey shows his seriousness and disgust with the way the rich are like. After being convinced by Irene, Godfrey ends up accepting a job as a butler for the family. In the story she tries to charm him, as well getting him to become a part of the family. Keep in mind that everyone in the family is wacky, for instance a horse

was ridden in the library within the mansion, and the brother enjoys doing gorilla impressions. (According to a TCM article possibly the best one in film history)

When watching *Nothing Sacred* we can see the other aspect that makes a screwball comedy, situational comedy. In the film Carol Lombard has to keep pretending she is about to die, while the rich make a cabaret show in a theatre in her honor. At the end she ends up coming clean to the people of the event. What would make situational comedy funny was how outlandish things would become down the line. Specially the harder the character attempts to achieve their goal despite the ridiculous things that deters them. One great example is *The Philadelphia Story*, in the scene when the two reporters attend a family event (of the family they are investigating on) as friends of the family. Even though the family knows they are reporters, they keep on pretending as if they do not know they are reporters, making the scene all much more hilarious.

Usually what made the comedy work was with the pair disliking each other, where they would bicker a lot with each other, but end up falling in love by the end. The quick witted and fast paced dialogues are one of the things that set these kinds of films apart from others. A great example of those factors is, *It Happened One Night*, where the female lead escapes from her home, and the male lead who is a recently unemployed newsman. When it comes to the personalities, the female lead would be the outgoing and adventurous one, while the male lead in contrary is

more serious, conservative, (when it came to viewing women) and not as adventurous. Remember at the time it was uncommon to see such a dynamic between a man and a woman in real life. When such movies were made The Hays Code was in place, which prohibited movies showing any kind of indecent acts. Therefore, a lot of movies would get creative in finding ways to show anything of sexual nature. That's why in screwball comedies the dialogues are so rapid and explosive, on top of that the way they look at each other, showed sexual tension between them. Take *Holiday* as the example, throughout the film we can see the attraction between Linda and Johnathan. There was no kiss between them, up until the finale of the movie.

In the latter part of it's history the dynamics between men and women had already changed drastically, to the point where the uncommon relationships seen in screwballs became common. Besides that anti-heroes became main stream in cinema, therefore making the genre obsolete in mainstream cinema. Nevertheless, we can see the influences it had left in cinema after they fully stopped making them. May it be the rapid and witty dialogues, or the dynamic between the carefree female lead and the viciously tamed male lead. (There were exceptions where the roles were flipped, for instance in *Holiday*. Julia was the more serious one, while Johnathan was the carefree one)

When it comes to Screw ball comedy inspired films, I highly recommend two films. One is *Who is that Girl?*, which stars Madonna, early on her career. The film *Overboard*, starring Kurt Russell and Goldie Hawn. (There is also the 2018 remake starring, Eugenio Derbez and Anna Faris). When it comes to Screwball comedies, the classic *Bringing Up Baby* is a must watch.