

Review #13 : *The Bribe* (1951)

Robert Taylor and Ava Gardner

TRAILER

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcpQ2FBAKj4>

REVIEW

Robert Taylor plays a federal agent flying down South to look into a smuggling problem. Whilst in the tropical Carlita, Taylor begins to look into the suspects he has been briefed about : a married couple that work at a night club. Sultry seductress Ava Gardner and husband John Hodiak play the couple. Director Robert Z. Leonard does a fine job with **atmosphere** in this **film noir classic of greed, retribution and forbidden love**. The settings reek with a kind of **sleazy realism** that you rarely see in films of this type. Leonard also shoots his scenes with an **intensity and trust in his performers** which is also refreshing. And why wouldn't he trust his performers?



Taylor gives the best performance I ever saw come out of him. He is actually believable in his role as a man torn with a love he should not have and a decision to make regarding his personal integrity. Gardner is also at her best giving a truly interesting portrayal as a woman also torn apart by like things. But the film really belongs to two screen legends **Charles Laughton and Vincent Price**, playing men with dubious natures : their great performances really bring this film up notches. Price oozes suave, despicable charm. His climactic scene with the fireworks is one of the best film finales of all-time. It is Charles Laughton, however, as a round bounder of sorts – dressed in a grubby white suit with unkempt hair seeming to be always around when you don't want him – that really steals the show. Laughton gives one of those performances that make you glued to his every word and action. He utters his lines with careful execution and deliberate pauses. He takes the mundane and turns it into something more like every time he sits down to take his shoes off and rub his bad feet...



Many highlights come to mind with this film : the aforementioned finale, Laughton rolling languidly through his scenes chewing whatever scenery is available, Laughton and Price sharing some scenes together, Ava Gardner dancing, and just above-average camera work and crisp dialog in that great film noir tradition. A classic and a must-see ! +++