

Review #86 : *Borderline* (1950)

Claire Trevor and Fred MacMurray

Borderline, directed by **William A. Seiter**, is a delicious combination between a noir film and a comedy romance, with another bravura performance by **Raymond Burr** as a thuggish dealer of dope in Mexico. **Fred MacMurray**'s icy cool performance and **Claire Trevor**'s jittery energy create a chemistry that ignites this forgotten gem !



SYNOPSIS

Pete Ritchie (menacing **Raymond Burr**) is a **shrewd and ruthless drug dealer**. Both the L.A.P.D. and United States Treasury Customs want to stop his dope smuggling ring bringing narcotics across the border from Mexico, but Ritchie can spot any agent at ten yards. He's holed up in a dusty Mexican town where he sends drug shipments into the States using innocent tourists as well as paid mules. Ritchie's smart but he's a sucker for dames. That's where Madeleine Haley (**Claire Trevor**) comes in. She's a former O. S. S. and an L.A. cop all right, but most of all, a female. Known as Gladys LaRue, Madeleine goes to this Mexican town under cover and gets a job singing and dancing (badly) in a sleazy cantina that Ritchie frequents in his usual white suit. Just when she starts making progress with Ritchie, Johnny Macklin (**Fred MacMurray** from *Double Indemnity*), a tough guy for hire, bursts in with a gun in his hand and a plan in his head. He's been hired by another gangster to hijack one of Ritchie's drug shipments. Johnny ends up taking Madeleine with him after the guns are drawn and the chase is on.

The chase across Mexico, as they try to avoid Ritchie and elude the cops is a lot of fun. Madeleine and Johnny start telling each other tall tales along the way. When Johnny's pal Miguel gets shot they have a body on their hands to deal with, complicating the chase even more – in a humorous kind of way.

Then we realize *** **SPOILER ALERT** that there are both U.S. agents working to bag **Ritchie** *** yet **neither knows about the other**. It's not long before the two of them are on the road headed for the U. S, staying overnight – coyly, of course – in a sleazy hotel. They're toting the drug shipment Ritchie's gangster competitor assigned them, as well as a suspicious music box, a fruitcake and a parrot in a big cage. Soon there's cold cream on Gladys' face and everything from a container for fingerprint powder to a camera in Macklin's coat pockets. When one goes to the lobby, the other whips out a camera to take secret photos. When one goes down the hall for a bath, the other... whips out a camera to take secret photos. And then Ritchie and his goons show up and a dangerous race, complete with cheery Mexican music and wise cracks, gets underway. Corpses are left in the dust with a tip of the sombrero to *siesta* time. Robert Mitchum and Jane Greer never had something like this to deal with.

There may be too many guns, shootings among **gang climaxes and dead bodies** for the romance to be completely heavenly, and for a *film noir*, there is simply too much silly nonsense going on, but *Borderline* quickly becomes an easy-going **chase comedy with fast-paced action, clever dialogue, silly situations, nifty mistaken identity issues**, interesting minor characters and **innocent romance** between the two talented principals as they try to get back to the border.



This **chase flick is meant as entertainment and fun, it doesn't take itself too seriously**, and neither should you. Fans of genre films like this will enjoy going south of the border with this one. Most definitely, the movie has got two very attractive leads. Listening to Trevor and MacMurray, still unaware of who they really are, trade stories about how they got started in the crime business does credit to their ability to keep straight faces. An entertaining surprise ! Jump for it ! +++

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i12seZ6KlhE>