

Review #14 : *Double Indemnity* (1944)

Fred McMurray and Barbara Stanwyck

TRAILER

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKrrAa2o9Eg>

Double Indemnity communicates with amazing effectiveness the depths of depravity, greed, lust and betrayal of the seemingly innocent and beautiful.



This is one of the best films of all time – not necessarily because of its story but because of the acting, direction, cinematography, lighting, and just the way that the story itself was told. At the time the film was released, the idea of revealing who the killer was in the opening scene was virtually unheard of, but it ended up being very effective because it allowed the audience to concentrate on other elements of the film, which was the goal of Billy Wilder.

Instead of trying to figure out who the perpetrator was, there is more emphasis on how **the crime was pulled off, what mistakes were made during the murder, who betrayed who,** how close the insurance investigator was getting to solving the case, what kind of person Walter Neff is and whether or not sympathy should be felt toward him.



Barbara Stanwyck, in one of the most remembered performances of her extensive career, represents – with nearly flawless ease – the cold and ruthless manipulator who has no difficulty in ruining other people's lives in various ways – including death, if necessary – in order to get what she wants. Known in the film community as the 'femme fatale,' this is someone who uses her sexual prowess, seductiveness, and emotional detachment to drag an unsuspecting man into a scheme from which she is expected to benefit heavily – while he is most likely headed for destruction. In these types of films, the man often either finds his life in ruins or ends up dead...

Barbara Stanwyck as Phyllis Dietrichson and Fred Mac Murray as Walter Neff have amazing chemistry on screen. Their attraction is incredibly well portrayed, and the development of their relationship with each other is so convincing that what happens between them almost seems normal. Besides that, their mutually calculated interaction represents each character's intentions, even very subtly foreshadowing their future betrayals against each

other. Phyllis has been planning for quite some time the prospect of murdering her husband in order to collect his fortune. Walter ultimately begins to suspect her but makes sure to tell her only what he wants her to hear. This **stiff dialogue** brilliantly represents Phyllis and Walter's sinister intentions, and it's quick pace creates a **feeling of urgency and restlessness**.



Probably the most fascinating and entertaining actor in the film is Edward G. Robinson. He plays Barton Keyes, Walter's friend and employer at the insurance company where he works. Keyes is a very suspicious man who closely investigates the insurance claims which come into the company, having a striking history of fraudulent claims and throwing them out. The way he gets closer to the truth creates a great atmosphere of **tension and drama**.

***Double Indemnity* is nearly flawless.** From the shocking and unexpected beginning to the already known but still surprising end, the audience is **held rapt by the excellent performances, the brilliant and imaginative direction** and the flawlessly created atmosphere. This is excellent filmmaking, and should not be missed +++

<http://filmmakeriq.com/lessons/film-screening-double-indemnity>