There are few films in all of film noir as deliciously dark as Fritz Lang’s Scarlet Street. It is an uncompromising look into our selfish culture of capitalism and the brutal drivers of our own frail nature. The moral cáoal move fan may not enjoy its downbeat ending, but they won’t soon forget it.

With razor sharp direction by master direc-
tor Lang, a scathing screenplay by Dudley Nichols, atmospheric camera work by ace cine-
mator Milton Krasner and solid per-
formances by Edward G. Robinson, Dan Duryea and Joan Bennett, the move has rightfully garnered praise among film critics, but has consistently been overlooked as the blockbuster classic that it is.

Nichols directed the film, set in Greenwich Village, about an aging bank cashier named Chris Cross played by the wonderful Edward G. Robinson. Cross lives in an apartment with his nagging wife out of prac-
tically to split the cost of his apartment. Through most of the film, Lang drives Cross as a foolishly sensitive, service, and emasculated little man—his wife harks at him to do the dishes, he cooks for her while wearing an apron, and later on is ful-
tilling the commands of the evil seductress Kitty (Joan Bennett).

Cross meets the beguiling Kitty after res-
cuing her one rain-
night from a group of un-
asassillant—the ruthless Johnny Prince (Dan Duryea) and later on in Kitty’s abusive pimp and scheming part-
tner. Kitty represents youthful desire to the age-
ing Cross whose wife has become a burdensome, nagging wife.

He soon permits (or is forced) to return to the apartment after Cross meets the beguiling (but mean and dirty) Kitty, their mirrored images as a consis-
tant motif. For Lang, Kitty, their mirrored selves come to represent their two-faced natures and the dual roles they must play.

Understanding Cross’ desires and initially assum-
ing Cross to be a man of wealth after noticing the seemingly expen-
sive he is wearing, Kitty不久后陷于娇宠。Lately, JohnnyPrince has a dirty little trick up his sleeve in order to lure him in and milk him for all that he doesn’t really have—

First with Kitty barraging her bedroom eyes to get Cross to sell the apart-
ment and then selling Cross’ art work that by chance becomes noticed by a big time critic, with Johnny convincing every-
one that Kitty was the actual painter.

Now, the obvious, what fol-

ows is a web of deceit that leads to the inevitable lurid conclusions but with some of the most brutal irony and perverse justice you will ever see in a Hollywood film from this era.

It is almost impossible to find bad things happen-
ing to seemingly good people. It is perhaps our purest honest genre—it gets right down into the dark underside of our con-
sumer culture and indeed, into our very natures.

Scarlet Street plays mean and dirty and it does not let anyone off the hook. Modern viewers used to the violence and awkward sexuality in classic films of the period will be shocked at what Lang deplicts in Scarlet Street.

So, yes—if you want a little romance, some farce, and a happy ending you’ll need to pick up a Doris Day flick.