The Seven Year Itch

The Seven Year Itch is a 1955 American romantic comedy film based on a three-act play with the same name by George Axelrod. The film was co-written and directed by Billy Wilder, and stars Marilyn Monroe and Tom Ewell, reprising his Broadway role from the play. It contains one of the most notable images of the 20th century – Monroe standing on a subway grate as her white dress is blown upwards by a passing train. The titular phrase, which refers to declining interest in a monogamous relationship after seven years of marriage, has been used by psychologists.

Contents

Plot
Cast
Soundtrack
Production
Release
Critical response
Box office
Awards and honors
See also
References
External links

Plot

Richard Sherman (Tom Ewell) is a nerdy, faithful, middle-aged publishing executive with an overactive imagination and a mid-life crisis, whose wife, Helen (Evelyn Keyes), and son, Ricky (Butch Bernard), are spending the summer in Maine. When he returns home with the kayak paddle Ricky accidentally left behind, he meets a woman (Marilyn Monroe), who is a commercial actress and former model who rents the apartment upstairs while in town to make television spots for a brand of toothpaste. That evening, he works on reading the manuscript of a book in which psychiatrist Dr. Brubaker (Oskar Homolka) claims that almost all men are driven to have extra-marital affairs in the seventh year of marriage. Sherman has an imaginary conversation with Helen, trying to convince her, in three fantasy sequences, that he is irresistible to women, including his secretary, a nurse, and Helen's...
bridesmaid, but she laughs it off. A tomato plant then crashes into his lounge chair; the woman upstairs apologizes for accidentally knocking it off the balcony, and Richard invites her down for a drink.

He waits for her to get dressed, including in underwear she says she keeps cool in her icebox. When she arrives, a vision in pink, they have a drink and he lies about being married. When she sees his wedding ring, he backtracks but she is unconcerned, having no designs on him, only on his air-conditioning. He has a fantasy that she is a femme fatale overcome by his playing of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto. In reality, she prefers Chopsticks, which they play together. Richard, overcome by his fantasies, awkwardly grabs at her, causing them to fall off the piano bench. He apologizes for his indiscretion but she says it happens to her all the time. Guilt-ridden, however, he asks her to leave.

Over the next few days, they spend more time together and Richard imagines that they are growing closer, although she is immune to his imagined charms. Helen continually calls her husband, asking him to send the paddle so Ricky can use the kayak, but Richard is repeatedly distracted. His waning resolve to resist temptation fuels his fear that he is succumbing to the "Seven Year Itch". He seeks help from Dr. Brubaker, but to no avail. His imagination then runs even wilder: the young woman tells a visiting plumber (Victor Moore) how Richard is "just like The Creature from the Black Lagoon"; the plumber repeats her story to neighbor McKenzie, whom Helen had asked to drop by to pick up Ricky's paddle. Richard imagines his wife with McKenzie on a hayride which actually takes place but into which he injects his paranoia, guilt and jealousy. After seeing The Creature from the Black Lagoon, the young woman stands over the subway grate to experience the breeze – Monroe in the iconic scene in the pleated white halter dress, blowing her skirt in the wind.

Eventually coming to his senses, and fearing his wife's retribution, which he imagines in a fantasy scene, Richard, paddle in hand, tells the young woman she can stay in his apartment; then he runs off to catch the next train to Maine to be with Helen and Ricky.

**Cast**

- Marilyn Monroe as The Girl (credited as such, though Richard Sherman satirically remarks "maybe she's Marilyn Monroe")
- Tom Ewell as Richard Sherman (billed as Tommy Ewell)
- Evelyn Keyes as Helen Sherman
- Sonny Tufts as Tom MacKenzie
- Robert Strauss as Kruhulik
- Oscar Homolka as Dr. Brubaker
- Marguerite Chapman as Miss Morris
- Victor Moore as Plumber
- Donald MacBride as Mr. Brady
- Roxanne as Elaine

June 3, 1955 (U.S.)

| Running time | 105 minutes |
| Country      | United States |
| Language     | English |
| Budget       | $1.8 million (est.) |
| Box office   | $12 million (USA)[1] |
|              | $6 million (US rentals)[1] |

[1] Source: [Box Office Mojo](https://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=sevitych.htm)
- Carolyn Jones as Nurse Finch
- Tom Nolan as Ricky Sherman (uncredited)
- Doro Merande as Waitress at Vegetarian Restaurant (uncredited)
- Kathleen Freeman as Woman at Vegetarian Restaurant (uncredited)

**Soundtrack**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Performer(s)</th>
<th>Note(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Piano Concerto No. 2&quot;</td>
<td>Gary Graffman, Leonard Bernstein, &amp; the NYPO[5]</td>
<td>Played on a record and often in the score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Sentimental Journey&quot;</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Played often in the score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Chopsticks&quot;</td>
<td>Marilyn Monroe and Tom Ewell</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Production**

*The Seven Year Itch* was filmed between September 1 and November 4, 1954, and was the only Billy Wilder film released by 20th Century Fox.

The characters of Elaine (Dolores Rosedale), Marie, and the inner voices of Sherman and The Girl were dropped from the play; the characters of the Plumber, Miss Finch (Carolyn Jones), the Waitress (Doro Merande), and Kruhulik the janitor (Robert Strauss) were added. Many lines and scenes from the play were cut or re-written because they were deemed indecent by the Hays office. Axelrod and Wilder complained that the film was being made under straitjacketed conditions. This led to a major plot change: in the play, Sherman and The Girl had sex; in the movie, the romance is all in his head. (At least for the most part. Romance between the two is still suggested. Sherman and the Girl kiss twice, once outside the movie theater, the other time before Sherman goes to take Ricky’s paddle to Ricky.)

The footage of Monroe’s dress billowing over a subway grate was shot twice: the first take was shot on location outside the Trans-Lux 52nd Street Theater, then located at 586 Lexington Avenue in Manhattan, while the second take was on a sound stage. Both eventually made their way into the finished film, despite the often-held belief that the original on-location footage’s sound had been rendered useless by the overexcited crowd present during filming in New York.

Footage of Walter Matthau and Ewell’s screen tests for Sherman is featured in the DVD of the film. Nicolas Roeg’s film *Insignificance* features a character based on Monroe and a re-enactment of the subway/dress scene.

The exterior shooting location of Richard’s apartment was 164 East 61st Street in Manhattan.[8]

Saul Bass created the opening animated title sequence for the film, his only title sequence for a Wilder movie.
Release

Critical response

The original 1955 review in Variety was largely positive. Though Hollywood production codes prohibited writer-director Billy Wilder from filming a comedy where adultery takes place, the review expressed disappointment that Sherman remains chaste.[8]

Review aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes gives the film an approval rating of 87% based on 30 reviews and an average score of 7.2/10.[10]

In the 1970s Wilder called the movie "a nothing picture because the picture should be done today without censorship... Unless the husband, left alone in New York while the wife and kid are away for the summer, has an affair with that girl there’s nothing. But you couldn’t do that in those days, so I was just straitjacketed. It just didn’t come off one bit, and there’s nothing I can say about it except I wish I hadn’t made it. I wish I had the property now."[11]

Box office

The film earned $6 million in rentals at the North American box office.[12]

Awards and honors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of ceremony</th>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Recipients and nominees</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 29, 1956</td>
<td>Directors Guild of America Award</td>
<td>Outstanding Directorial Achievement in Motion Pictures</td>
<td>Billy Wilder</td>
<td>Nominated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 23, 1956</td>
<td>Golden Globe Awards</td>
<td>Best Actor – Motion Picture Musical or Comedy</td>
<td>Tom Ewell</td>
<td>Won</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2000, American Film Institute included the film as #51 in AFI's 100 Years...100 Laughs.[17]

See also

- List of American films of 1955
- Forever Marilyn – a giant statue of Monroe in the white dress, by John Seward Johnson II, in Palm Springs, California.

References

The Seven Year Itch

The Seven Year Itch (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048605/) on IMDb
The Seven Year Itch (https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v43862) at AllMovie
The Seven Year Itch (http://tcmdb.com/title/jsptid=89662) at the TCM Movie Database
The Seven Year Itch (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/seven_year_itch/) at Rotten Tomatoes
The Seven Year Itch review (http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117794783.html?categoryid=31&cs=1&p=0) at Variety
All Time Domestic Champs", Variety, 6 January 1960, p. 34.

External links

- The Seven Year Itch (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0048605/) on IMDb
- The Seven Year Itch (https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v43862) at AllMovie
- The Seven Year Itch (http://tcmdb.com/title/jsptid=89662) at the TCM Movie Database
- The Seven Year Itch (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/seven_year_itch/) at Rotten Tomatoes
- The Seven Year Itch review (http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117794783.html?categoryid=31&cs=1&p=0) at Variety
- The Seven Year Itch famous subway breeze scene becomes a twenty-six foot tall statue in 2011 (http://edwardlifson.blogspot.com/2011/07/marilyn-meets-miesian-modernism-and.html)
- "Marilyn Monroe's Long-Lost Skirt Scene" (http://www.wnyc.org/story/marilyn-monroes-lost-skirt-scene)—January 26, 2017 piece on Studio 360

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Seven_Year_Itch&oldid=847936726"

This page was last edited on 28 June 2018, at 19:53 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.