

# Black Cast Films

Films with all African-American casts made for black audiences in the 1930s-50s. Some DVD-Rs come with extras or double features as noted.

## **The Blood of Jesus**

(1941) 57 min. Spencer Williams film about an atheist who accidentally shoots his Baptist wife, who must fight the Devil for her soul. With "Boogie-Woogie Dream" musical short.

## **Boarding House Blues**

(1948) 86 min. Moms Mabley and Dusty Fletcher. Tenants of a Harlem boarding house put on a show to save their home.

## **Boy! What a Girl!**

(1947) 70 min. Tim Moore, Elwood Smith, Duke Williams. A couple of theatrical producers try to get backing for their musical show.

## **The Bronze Buckaroo**

(1939) 58 min. Herb Jeffries sings and shoots in a black cast western. With "Bubbling Over" musical short.

## **The Devil's Daughter**

(1939) 59 min. Nina Mae McKinney runs afoul of voodoo in Jamaica. Comes with **Son of Ingagi** (1940) 61 min., only fair quality. Spencer Williams in haunted house horror film.

## **Dirty Gertie from Harlem**

(1946) 65 min. Francine Everett, Don Wilson. A sexy, enticing dancer from Harlem makes things happen in a sleepy Caribbean island resort. With **Sepia Cinderella** (1947) with Billy Daniels and Sheila Guyse.

## **The Duke Is Tops** ("Bronze Venus")

(1938) 63 min. Lena Horne plays a night club singer who gets a chance at Broadway.

## **Gang War**

(1940) 63 min. Ralph Cooper in gangster film set in Harlem. With "Mr. Adam's Bomb" short.

## **Go Down Death**

(1940) 56 min. Myra D. Hemmings, Samuel H. James. A bar owner attempts to discredit the new preacher with whom he is feuding by framing him with a photograph showing him drinking with women with bad reputations. With Amos 'N Andy "Lion Tamer" cartoon and Inki cartoon.

## **Hi De Ho**

(1947) 64 min. Cab Calloway is a band leader pressured to work in a gangster bar. With a collection of musical Soundies.

## **Jivin' in Be-Bop**

(1946) 58 min. Dizzie Gillespie and his musical friends have a ball. With cartoons "Hittin' the Trail for Hallelujah Land" and "Uncle Tom and Little Eva."

## **Juke Joint**

(1947) 58 min. Spencer Williams is a con man involved in small town beauty contest. With cartoons Amos 'n Andy "Rassling Match" and "Jasper in a Jam."

## **Moon Over Harlem**

(1939) 68 min. A girl's mother marries a philanderer, who then pursues the daughter. When caught, the mother throws her out into the world of Broadway shows.

## **Murder on Lenox Avenue**

(1941) 65 min. Mamie Smith, Alec Lovejoy. Dramatic events in a Harlem apartment house. Pa Wilkins is chosen by the Better Business League to replace their ousted, crooked leader Marshall.

## **Murder with Music**

(1941) 57 min. Night club singer Nelle Hill has many suitors -- an escaped convict, a piano player and a newspaper man. One is killed. With musical shorts "Murder in Swingtime," "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Symphony in Black," and "Ain't Misbehaving."

## **Paradise in Harlem**

(1939) 60 min. Crime drama centered on a club singer who aspires to be a great dramatic actor.

## **Reet, Petite and Gone**

(1947) 67 min. Bandleader Louis Jordan stars in a dual role. With "Cab Calloway's Jitterbug Party."

## **Rock 'N' Roll Revue and Rhythm & Blues Revue**

(1955) Two one-hour compilations of black performers on stage: Dinah Washington, Mantan Moreland, Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole, Safah Vaughn, Lionel Hampton, Herb Jeffries, etc.

## **Showtime at the Apollo**

(1954) 80 min. Musical variety show filmed in New York's Apollo Theater with many stars: Nipsey Russell, Duke Ellington, the Clovers, Herb Jeffries, Dinah Washington, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, etc.

**The Spirit of Youth** (1938) 66 min. Joe Louis stars in story about the rise of a boxer. Visual quality is only passable.

## **Showcasing Black Actors**

The following films feature famous black actors in films with white actors.

### **Check and Double Check**

(1930) 80 min. Radio's Amos 'N Andy (white actors Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll in black face) in a feature comedy. With Duke Ellington.

### **The Emperor Jones**

(1933) 72 min. Paul Robeson plays a porter who escapes from a chain gang to become king of a Caribbean island. Based on the play by Eugene O'Neil.

### **The Jackie Robinson Story**

(1950) 76 min. Jackie Robinson stars in own biography as first black baseball player in majors.

### **Judge Priest**

(1934) 80 min. Will Rogers comedy is a showcase for black comedian Stepin Fetchit.

**The Joe Louis Story** (1953) 88 min. Coley Wallace in biography of the Heaveyweight champ.

### **Topper Returns**

(1941) Rochester is featured in this mystery-comedy about Cosmo Topper (Roland Young) helping ghost Joan Blondell find her own killer.

## Mantan Moreland Co-Starring Features:

### **Freckles Comes Home**

(1942) Gale Storm, Johnny Downs, Mantan Moreland. Two pals encounter an obstinate hick town sheriff who accuses them of murder.

### **The Gang's All Here**

(1941) Frankie Darro, Mantan Moreland comedy / crime B-picture.

### **Irish Luck**

(1939) Frankie Darro, Mantan Moreland. An amateur detective teams up with a frightened bell-hop to solve a series of hotel murders.

### **King of the Zombies**

(1941) 67 min. Dick Purcell, Joan Woodbury, Mantan Moreland. Fiendish Mad doctor creates Zombies for the Axis. Mantan Moreland turns this chiller into a hilariously funny film.

### **Law of the Jungle**

(1942) Arline Judge, Mantan Moreland. Nazis hide among jungle natives in this classic Monogram thriller.

### **Let's Go Collegiate**

(1941) Frankie Darro & Mantan Moreland in a college musical.

With **Up In the Air** (1940) Frankie Darro, Mantan Moreland in mystery-comedy set in radio station.

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## Cavalcade of Black Musical Shorts

Bessie Smith in **St. Louis Blues**  
Lena Horne in **Boogie-Woogie Dream**  
Ethel Waters in **Bubbling Over**  
Duke Ellington -- **Symphony in Black**  
Cab Calloway's **Jitterbug Party**  
    **"Murder in Swingtime"**  
    **"Mr. Adam's Bomb"**  
    **"Open the Door Richard"**  
Fats Waller **"Ain't Misbehaving"**  
Louis Armstrong **"Shine"**  
The Mills Brothers, Dorothy Dandridge: **"Paper Doll"**