KINONIK

BEAT THE DEVIL (1953)

Directed by John Huston

WEDNESDAY March 25th 7PM

SATURDAY March 28th 2PM / 7PM



Humphrey Bogart and a gang of crooks are stuck in a shabby Italian port town, waiting for a broken-down steamer to take them to Africa. They're going to buy uranium-rich land and get spectacularly wealthy... or so they claim. The problem is that everyone is lying about everything; Jennifer Jones plays a British woman who can't tell the truth to save her life, inventing elaborate fantasies every time she opens her mouth. Robert Morley, Peter Lorre, and Gina Lollobrigida round out a cast of spectacular frauds, all scrambling over each other to steal what doesn't exist.

John Huston made this on location in 1953 with a 28-year-old Truman Capote writing scenes the morning they were shot. Bogart lost several teeth in a car accident mid-production; Peter Sellers dubbed his lines while he recovered. The whole thing was a spectacular mess, lost money, and Bogart reportedly said "only phonies like it." Roger Ebert later called it the first camp film. What Huston and Capote understood is that the con is funnier when everyone knows it's a con and keeps playing anyway. The crooks are transparently crooked; the British couple are obvious fakes; the uranium scheme is absurd on its face. Nobody believes anyone, and yet the machinery grinds forward because what else are you going to do? Number must go up.

We're showing this in March 2026 while the largest grift in American history continues in plain sight. The con isn't hidden anymore; it's the business model. Everyone's lying, everyone knows everyone's lying, and the show goes on. Beat the Devil asks: what if we just laughed at the sheer brazen stupidity of it all?