KINONIK

OUT OF THE PAST (1947)

Directed by Jacques Tourneur

WEDNESDAY August 26th 7PM

SATURDAY August 29th 2PM / 7PM



Out of the Past opened quietly in November 1947 and made a modest profit. It was one more well-crafted RKO thriller. Over decades it became revered among the purest examples of film noir anyone ever made, one that fused the doomed man, the untrustworthy woman, and the labyrinth of flashback into a single perfect specimen. Like its hero, it seemed at first to be one thing and turned out to be something far more consequential.

Having come up in Val Lewton's horror unit, known within RKO as “The Snake Pit,” director Jacques Tourneur understood darkness better than anyone in Hollywood. Together with his cameraman Nicholas Musuraca they made Out of the Past a film where the lighting is a moral map: luminous and open when freedom is at hand, closing into pools of shadow as the past tightens its grip.

Robert Mitchum, in the role that made him a star, plays Jeff Bailey with the sleepy, exhausted fatalism of a man too tired to fight a doom he can see coming from miles away — while 22-year-old Jane Greer plays Kathie Moffat, who might be post-truth in a single body; how disinformation would look if it had a face you wish you could touch. Every account she gives is calibrated to the listener. She lies, and when each lie is exposed she covers it with another... and the tragedy is that Jeff would rather be destroyed by her fiction than saved by anyone else's fact.

Jeff changed his name, opened a two-pump station in a small mountain town, and for a few years he was simply a nobody with no history, courting a local girl, waiting on cars in the clean Sierra light. Then came a black sedan driven by a man sent to verify a rumor.

That's the engine of **Out of the Past**, and it's why the film's somewhat banal title has quietly become one of the most chilling three-word phrases in American cinema. Because there is no out anymore. Every prior version of a person is archived and searchable by anyone with a grievance and a data broker... or an account with Flock. The clean interval Jeff got, those years of being nobody, is an option that may cease to exist. The past doesn't have to come knocking, because you’ll never leave it, and it paves the moonless road in front of you.