

“Play it Sam. Play As time goes by,” Elsa in the film *Casablanca*

Casablanca is a 1942 American romantic drama film directed by [Michael Curtiz](#) and **starring** [Humphrey Bogart](#), [Ingrid Bergman](#), and [Paul Henreid](#). Filmed and **set**, during World War II, it focuses on an American expatriate (Bogart) who must choose between his love for a woman (Bergman) and helping her husband (Henreid), a Czechoslovak resistance leader, escape from the Vichy-controlled city of Casablanca to continue his fight against the Nazis. [...]

Although *Casablanca* was an [A-list](#) film with established stars and **first-rate** (top) writers, no one involved with its production expected it to **stand out** among the many pictures produced by Hollywood yearly. *Casablanca* was **rushed** into release to take advantage of the publicity from the [Allied invasion of North Africa](#) a few weeks earlier. It had its world premiere on November 26, 1942, in New York City and was **released** nationally in the United States on January 23, 1943. [...]

Exceeding expectations, *Casablanca* **went on to** to win the Academy Award for Best Picture, while Curtiz was selected as Best Director and the Epsteins and Koch were honored for Best Adapted Screenplay. Its reputation has gradually grown, to the point that its lead characters, memorable lines, and **pervasive** theme song have all become iconic, and it consistently **ranks** near the top of lists of the greatest films in history. [[Wikipedia: Casablanca \(film\)](#)]

In one of the many famous scenes Elsa (Bergman) takes a table at *Rick's Café Américain*, which Rick (Bogart) has established in Casablanca after the leaving Paris alone, as German forces arrived in June 1940. The scene starts with Elsa asking Rick's friend and piano man, Sam, to play [As time goes by](#), the love song she shared with Rick in Paris before she left him. Sam pretends he has forgotten the **tune**. Rick then walks into the Café, and is furious with Sam, until he sees Elsa. Later in the scene, Elsa introduces Rick to her husband, Victor Lazlo (Henried), the Czech resistance leader. The cynical French police chief, Captain Louis Renault ([Claude Rains](#)) **witnesses** the remarkable scene.

Obviously, the film has aged in many ways, most notably in stereotyping the relationships between men and women, and in its generally **“Orientalist”** portrayal of Casablanca. But it remains a powerful story about love and friendship, and has given cinema and the English language many lasting expressions:

- *Play it Sam. Play “As time goes by”* often mis-quoted as “Play it again Sam”
- *Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine*. Rick has started drinking again and laments that Elsa has appeared in his Café.
- *Here's looking at you kid*. A toast, an expression Rick used in Paris, when having a drink with Elsa.
- *Round up the usual suspects*, the cynical order by Captain Renault when making arrests. [The Usual Suspects](#) later became the name of a great **Whodunnit** film.
- *Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship*, the famous final line. See: Natalie Bushe, [“Here's looking at you: Why is Casablanca so very quotable?”](#), BBC Arts, 30 June 2022.

Starring: with the star actor

To set: to put in a time and place

The setting: the situation in which the story takes place

First-rate: top rate, the best

To stand out: to be notable, better

Rushed: hurried

Released: distributed

Went on to: go on to: proceed with

Pervasive: spreading throughout

To rank: to classify, to list

Tune: a melody that characterises a piece of music

To witness: to see something happen

[Orientalism](#): the way Westerners view “the Orient”, in a patronising, stereotypical way.

Whodunnit: a detective story or police film, asking “Who has done the murder?”