

# FrameWork 3/26

## Auden Tura on Gareth Long

*I Can't Give You Anything but Love, Baby.*



VINYL  
**I Can't Give You Anythi...**  
Fats Waller & His Rhythm  
1958 • AU



SHELLAC  
**I Can't Give You Anythi...**  
Benny Goodman And His Or...  
1943 • US



VINYL  
**I Can't Get No...**  
Jimmy McGriff  
1966 • US



SHELLAC  
**Darktown Strutters' Bal...**  
Fats Waller & His Rhythm  
1940 • US



VINYL  
**I Can't Give You Anythi...**  
Jasmine (15)  
1915 • US



VINYL  
**Lover Come Back To M...**  
Aretha Franklin  
1973 • IT



SHELLAC  
**I Can't Give You Anythi...**  
Billie Holiday  
1936 • US



SHELLAC  
**Sugarfoot Stomp / I Ca...**  
Benny Goodman And His Or...  
1948 • UK



VINYL  
**Louis Armstrong And E...**  
Louis Armstrong And His Or...



VINYL  
**I Can't Give You Anythi...**  
Fats Waller & His Rhythm  
1958 • US



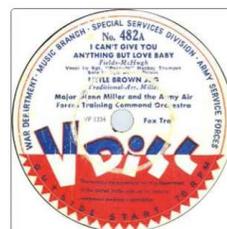
SHELLAC  
**I'm Sorry Sally / I Can't...**  
Shilkret's Rhythm-Melodists  
1928 • US



SHELLAC  
**I Can't Give You Anythi...**  
Benny Goodman And His Or...  
1939 • US



VINYL  
**Here We Go Again/I Ca...**  
Jasmine (15)  
1915 • US



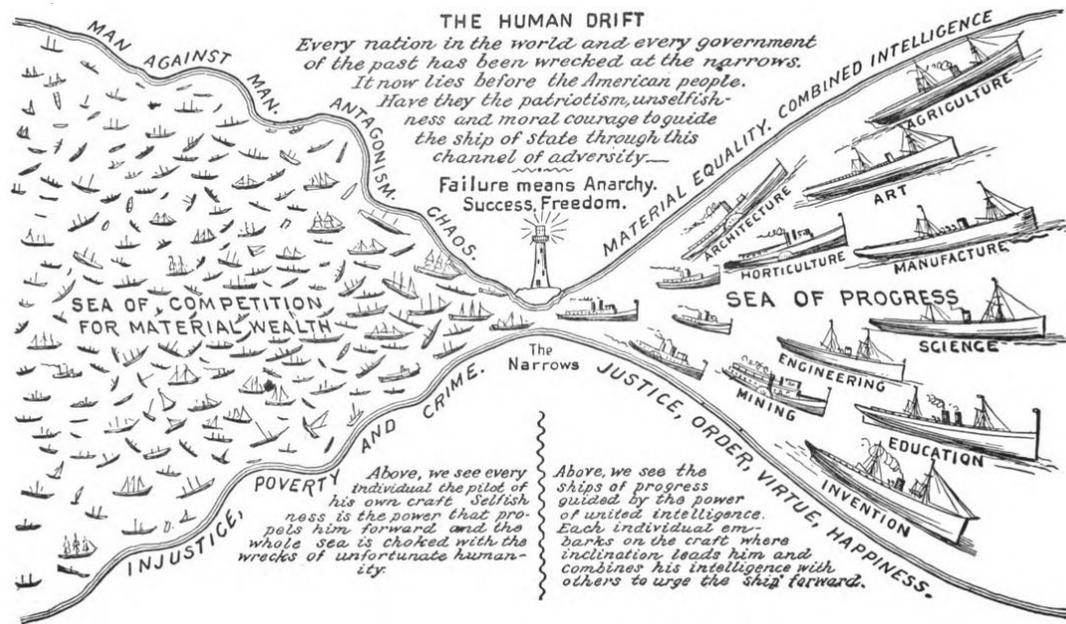
VINYL  
**I Can't Give You Anythi...**  
Glenn Miller  
1945 • US



VINYL  
**I Can't Give You Anythi...**  
Fats Waller & His Rhythm  
1958 • NZ

“I Can't Give You Anything but Love, Baby” remains one of the most recorded pop songs of all time since its release in 1928. The majority of these recordings took place before 1950, and, as such, it features in a number of films produced during this period, including Marlene Dietrich’s rendition in *Seven Sinners* (1944), the wartime musical *Jam Session* (1944), and Howard Hawks’ screwball comedy *Bringing Up Baby* (1938). Not incidentally, these decades were also the prime of the classic Hollywood film, a period of strict adherence to generic conventions and the star system.

In 1934, the Hays Code introduced widespread censorship measures across the American film industry, requiring every major motion picture to submit to review and receive a stamp of approval before screening. The Production Code Administration (PCA), an industry-wide examining board in Hollywood, developed these guidelines as a formula for guaranteed profit, in a kind of Fordist (Gillettist?), “assembly line” mode of filmmaking. *Bringing Up Baby*, however, notoriously failed to generate much revenue during its initial theatrical run. Directors and actors were advised to avoid profane language and nudity, as well as discussions of sex, drugs, homosexuality, theft, murder, religion, international relations, firearms, animal cruelty, or the institution of marriage, among other topics, to avoid “lowering the moral standards” of audiences.



Similar to the Hays Code, King C. Gillette’s speculative utopian design for a city, Metropolis, was intended to streamline social progress and increase efficiency, production, and profit. The urban plan proposed the consolidation of all industry and residential space into one “United Company,” organized into hexagonal blocks that would house and employ the entire population of North America. Both the PCA and Gillette placed significant emphasis on the danger of individual expression towards progress and order, and, as a result, its threat to collective happiness and equality.

Naturally, there were bound to be moments in classic Hollywood film that strayed from the guidelines; no two leopards have identical spots. Perhaps the best example of this in *Bringing Up Baby* is Cary Grant’s famously ad-libbed line, “I just went gay all of a sudden!”, which allegedly slipped past the censors because usage of the term to connote queerness was not yet common knowledge to the PCA, or to audiences. In 1938, this was exceptional – the line is thought to be the first and only on-screen use of the word “gay” in this context during the Code era – but, through repetition over time, has become absorbed into popular culture and everyday speech.



In this scene, Grant is “caught” wearing Susan’s robe – in fact, several of Hawks’ films contain a sequence where the male lead appears in women’s clothing for comedic effect. It is scenes like these which, perhaps incidentally, might encourage a more nuanced understanding of gender in audiences, using humour as a vehicle for social critique and/or change. In contrast to David’s levelheadedness, the film also pokes fun at its bourgeois characters like Susan, who is preoccupied with petty concerns like transporting a poached leopard (a trophy of colonial endeavours) by car from her New York City apartment to her aunt’s estate in Connecticut.

Overall, *Bringing Up Baby* is far from revolutionary in its treatment of gender and sexuality – the conclusion of the film, in keeping with the tenets of the screwball, neatly resolves in a heteronormative coupling. The main characters abandon any previously established professional or personal goals – like David’s aspirations to completely reassemble a Brontosaurus skeleton – once they have reckoned with their *true* purpose: marriage. Hawks refused to call himself a feminist, although his female characters were often career-oriented and, until the end of the film, wholly independent. At once, the “Hawksian woman” archetype represents some tenets of feminism while remaining an object of desire and an instrument of reiterating patriarchal values.

At the climax of *Bringing Up Baby*, the protagonists release an undomesticated circus leopard from its cage, mistaking it for Susan's pet leopard, Baby. This is far from the first instance of a mistaken identity in the film: nearly every misfortune that befalls the cast spurs from misrecognition. In this sequence, *Bringing Up Baby's* formal structure necessarily breaks from the language of continuity editing, rupturing the diegesis of the absurd, utopian realm where the film takes place. Several of Nissa's (the leopard actor) appearances in *Bringing Up Baby* used rear projection and split screen techniques to minimize the cast's encounters with the animal. In this way, the film's central interactions are not really interactions at all – between two living creatures, that is – but instead a consolidation of disparate viewpoints into one cohesive image. These early “CGI” techniques were tenuous and inevitably subject to error; looking closely, one might notice the leopard slightly out of focus or strangely illuminated in contrast with its fellow actors, similar to a “drift” or offset in the colours of a silkscreen print.



In Hagar Wilde's "Bringing Up Baby," the short story on which the film is based, Baby is described as "the only [leopard] in the history of music with a critical ear": she can only be subdued by listening to "I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby," according to the letter that Susan receives with instructions for taking care of her. Baby's domestication is a habit developed through repetition, much like any elementary form of learning: "it is not by chance that a poem must be learned by heart."<sup>1</sup> The song is an agent of progress in the film, as Baby's actions prompt the two characters' lives to spiral out of control and, eventually, back into normalcy.

<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 1.

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In *Bringing Up Baby*, the leopards more often break out of the temple than into it; the film is simultaneously stuck in a loop of conformity, adhering to externally imposed “moral” guidelines, while also containing exceptional moments that are integral to its role in (counter)cultural formation through repetition and humour. At the same time, *Bringing Up Baby* is rooted in a distinctly capitalist mode of filmmaking. As the works in *Leopards, Laughter, Razors, Drift* acknowledge, these contradictory truths might coexist in a person, a song, an artwork, a film, an exhibition, or an entire methodology of cultural production.