All American production companies, distributing in Britain, were required by law to produce a certain amount of British films every year. Most of the companies disposed of this obligation by making real cheapies, not caring whether they were ever shown or not, but Warners, under the British supervision of Irving Asher, took their responsibilities seriously and did turn out some really good little films, films moreover that were thoroughly British and designed for home consumption primarily. "Mr. Cohen Takes a Walk", though directed by an American, is such a film - and a delight. It fares badly unfortunately; of quality and length suitable for top feature presentation, it was light on star names and rather too specialised in theme - such emphatically Jewish stories, even of much universal appeal as here, were never popular in England, and were done far less frequently than in Hollywood. (The Jewish-Irish "conflict" would seem to be an American stage and film imported convention too!) "Mr. Cohen" disappeared almost immediately in England; I saw it on its first release in 1936, and there after was never able to track it - or a print - down again until the acquisition of this print just a few months ago. In this country too, the film is virtually, and undeservedly, unknown. Its plot bears more than a casual resemblance to at least three British vehicles of the same period, and it is a bit protracted. The gentle charm and the pleasing rural scenery, once the walk gets under way, are so enjoyable that it's a pity Mr. Cohen's promise didn't begin earlier. But that's a minor quibble, as is the rather overdone use of Jewish musical themes - although "Mother O'Mine" gets a look in, and the End title even borrows from Berkeley's "Spin a Web of Dreams"! It's a quiet and civilised little picture, with even the labor disputes that form part of the story being conducted on a note of gentlemanly decorum. The big store incidently is Bentall's at Kingston-on-Thames - still looking much the same, and presumably one of the very close proximity to the Washington Studios where the film was made. Paul Grand, an excellent actor who played good character roles in many British films and often unbilled bits in American ones (viz last month's "Public Enemy's Wife") here has his best and certainly biggest film role; quite incidentally, Ralph Truman at this stage in his career was an exact double for Britain's chief movie impresario, J. Arthur Rank. It's good to have "Mr. Cohen" back in circulation - and I hope that a (presumably) large audience attracted by Ralph Walsh and Wm."In Old Arizona" will be very pleasantly surprised by him.


After becoming famous for so many years almost exclusively because of its sound recording of crying bacon, it's a little disillusioning to find that there's no bacon in the film, only ham and eggs. The bacon was in "Billy the Kid"! If nothing else, the film proves how quickly Walsh adjusted to sound; "In Old Arizona" is painfully slow, often tedious to talk just for its own sake; but "The Cockeyed World" of just six months later is really paced with a remarkable staccato rhythm. Frankly, "In Old Arizona" seems to have made little attempt to really exploit sound in the medium of the Western; the voice over location, especially, the exteriors take place at night that they could just as well have been done on a studio sound stage. By virtue of its cast and its definitely strong ending, it remains an interesting film - but it's the interest of the rather archaic milestone rather than that of the permanent classic. There had been one or two much earlier Cisco Kids, but this was the first elaborate feature essay on the character, and it won an Academy Award for Baxter. Frankly, it must have been the apparent versatility of his performance - a standard silent star breaking out into dialect - that did it, for it really isn't that good a piece of work. It still inclines me to his performances at Monogram in the 40's - and especially in "The Gay Cavalier" and "Beauty and the Bandit" - had more subtlety. Lowe's is actually the better performance, though probably a more familiar one. The print is fully complete, even to the DeSilva, Brown and Henderson song "My Tonie" sung before the main titles.

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