Monday next, August 16th: "THE AMAZING DR. CLITTERHOUSE" (1938, dir: Anatole Litvak) with Edward G. Robinson, Humphrey Bogart, Claire Trevor; preceded by a Laurel & Hardy 3-reeler "Oliver the 8th" and Charlie Chase's "Nurse to You".

August 9 1937

The Theodore Huff Memorial Film Society

"THE LOVE MATCH" (British Lion-Beechfield, 1956) Director: David Pulitzer
Presented by Jack Hylton; Produced by MacLean Rogers; Screenplay by Geoffrey Orme from the play of the same title by A. Melvyn; Camera, Arthur Grant; Music: Wilfred Barnes; 8 reels.

Arthur Askey, a British comic unfamiliar to most Americans, came into prominence (like several other British comedians, notably Jack Warner and Tommy Handley) at the beginning of World War Two with a hit radio show. Askey's forte was fast patter, music-hall sketches, dizzy and semi-blue songs, and a bizarre collection of characters somewhat along the lines of those utilised by Fred Allen in this country. I have especially fond recollections of a rough-hewn cleaning lady who went by the name of Nuala Reganash! Askey's radio show was called "Band Wagon", and almost immediately he was put into a film of the same name—topical slapstick involving spies. He followed up with "The Ghost Train" (which we hope to show soon) and a good straight farce, "Charley's Aunt". All of these made use of Askey's radio character: a good-hearted but belligerent little man with some choice catch-phrases. There was no sentiment or pathos in his work, and no romantic involvement ever; to take care of the love interest, he had a good-looking foil in Richard "Stinker" Murdoch. Askey's next five films showed a gradual lessening in comic content however, and a veering towards musical comedy extravaganzas. He apparently retired from the screen in 1944, and "The Love Match" was his first film after an eleven year absence. Askey followed only a trio of others the last in 1959. He has, of course, been active in the music halls and especially the Christmas pantomimes; a couple of years ago he played the traditional low-comedy "dams" as foil to Engeler Pumpernick in "Robinson Crusoe", where his meagre was weak but his timing impeccable.

"The Love Match", coming so long after Askey's brief peak period in British films, hardly does justice to him, nor is it typical of his work, except in one sense: the timing of his lines and his reactions is again superb, so good that it is often (as it should be) unobtrusive. The film has been a failure, although it played with a canny means of introducing Askey to Hollywood—it is quite surprisingly good. Although a regional comedy, it isn't lost in a morass of accents, and is both very amusing and sometimes touching. One or two verbal gags are traditional Askeyisms, and may not be understood here, but otherwise it's a solidly entertaining film. It was never released here, though it has had some tv showings. Thora Hird, who plays Askey's wife, is of course a familiar British character actress and comedienne, but this is probably her biggest role. Quite incidentally she is the means by which leading lady Brenda De Banzie (though funny) footage devoted to Rob Wiltson can be explained by the fact that Wiltson was also a very popular music-hall and radio comedian (of the 30's and 40's), always doing virtually the same act — as a befuddled magistrate.

"AS LONG AS THEY'RE HAPPY" (Rank-Raymond Stroeh, 1953) Dir: J. Lee Thompson
In Eastman Color; screenplay by Alan Neill from the play by Vernon Sylvaine; Camera: Gilbert Taylor; Art Director, Michael Stringer; Songs by Sam Coslow; Musical Score and Direction: Stanley Black; 7 reels.
With Jack Buchanan, Janette Scott, Joan Carseon, Brenda De Banzie, Diana Dors, Susan Stephen, Jerry Wayne, Hugh Meredith, David Hurst, Athene Seyler, Joan Sims, Nigel Green, Dora Bryan, Gilbert Hardie.

Although released in the US by Rank Distributors, I cannot recall this film ever playing in NY, although I suppose it may have slipped in and out of 42nd St. Certainly it had no official first-run treatment: it was a wholesale onslaught on the American "popular" market, it contains elements of alleged American appeal - somewhat outdated comedy revolving around British Bobby-soxers and an American crooner - but is actually far more representative of what really is a typical West-End musical designed to appeal to largely contemporary appeal, the kind of show that never wins, and always succeeds. "As Long as They're Happy" is amazingly short, fast-paced, completely if never spectacularly amusing, and well cast. Janette Scott is an increasingly charming as always the teen-ager, and Diana Dors has one of her most effective roles as a comedy siren - looking so dazzling that it's hard to reconcile her with the mountainous blit that she had become by the time of "There's a Girl in my Soup". But of course the film's major asset is Jack Buchanan, who dominates its last films, singing and clowning in the same vein in his stage hits and films of the 30's. It's a real pleasure just to sit back and watch such an effortless and undiminished talent wrap up the whole film so easily.

----- WM. K. EVerson -----