"A SUCCESSFUL CALAMITY" (Warner Brothers, 1932) Directed by John G. Adolfi
Scenario: Maude Howell, Austin Parker and Julian Josephson from a story by
Clara Krummer; Camera, James Van Trees; Art Director, Anton Grot; With: George
Arliss, Mary Astor, Evalyn Knapp, Grant Mitchell, William Janney, Randolph Scott,
Hardie Albright, David Torrence, Richard Tucker, Hale Hamilton, Fortunio Bomann,
Charles Coleman, Jack Rutherford, Claire McDowell, Murray Kinell.

A George Arliss-Deanna Durbin combination proved to be a most felicitous and
civilised combination last season, and is perhaps even more so this time with
Charles Laughton tossed in for good measure; our only regret is that we have
already played the rest of the Arliss and Durbin films, and so there are few such
combinations left to us. "A Successful Calamity" came two-thirds of the
way through Arliss' Warner period, and it's a standard but thoroughly satisfying
work, a light-weight entry to be sure, but these have a habit of working best with
an audience, where Arliss' sure touch and theatrical timing seem to reach across the
years and beyond the cameras to establish a rapport in the manner of the
live stage. The beautifully played "discussion" with his daughter's snobbish
suitor is a superb example of this. Editor Howard Bredherton, later to direct
so many westerns, keeps it nicely paced - insofar as any editor has much leeway
on an Arliss film! Art director Anton Grot has relatively few opportunities,
and is called upon in one scene to provide decor debunking art-deco, and does it
rather well. The Burbank hills don't really suggest Long Island, although the
kitchen-set from the Long Island mansion in "Dr. X" is pressed into service again,
and one feels that George Arliss and Lionel Atwill probably would brew their
morning tea in such a kitchen. All of the cast go through their accustomed
paces very nicely, even that eternal spendthrift and whiner William Janney being
to easy to take on this occasion. It's Arliss' show all the way of course, but
one should give a special nod to Mary Astor, lovely and graceful as always who,
without makeup, manages to suggest quite subtly that she is a woman old enough
to be Arliss' wife.

- Intermission -

"IT STARTED WITH EVE" (Universal, 1941) Directed by Henry Koster; Produced by
Joe Pasternak; Screenplay by Norman Krasna and Leo Townsend from an
original story by Hans Kraly; Camera, Rudolph Mate; Art Director, Jack
Otterson; 8 reels
With: Deanna Durbin, Charles Laughton, Robert Cummings, Guy Kibbee, Walter
Catlett, Margaret Tallichet, Catherine Doucet, Charles Coleman, Leonard Elliott,
Irving Bacon, Gus Schilling, Wade Boteler, Dorothea Kent, Chick Chandler,
Alexander Granach, Tim Ryan, Rosalind Ivan, Mary Gordon, Paul Porcasi, Larry
Steers, John Hamilton, Sig Arno, Robert Homans, Mantan Moreland, John Eldrige,
Selmer Jackson, Sara Padden, Leon Belasco, Charles Davis, Bess Flowers, Jack
Muhll.

Rather than repeat and condense our many other earlier notes about Durbin, we refer
you to a long career article appearing in the next (November) issue of "Films
in Review". "It Started With Eve", which was one of the major hits of 1941, was
the 10th of her 21 features for Universal - and the last one done by the Pasternak-
Koster team. The formula, the flair and the style run out when their group came
to an end; there was more than a year before her next film, and the gap in between
underscored the exit of the old Durbin, and the failure to create a new format.
There were at least two very good films ahead, but they weren't essentially Durbin
vehicles. "IT Started with Eve" is tasteful and unusually elegant in setting
and photography, very much of a piece with the preceding films, though it's also
slower-paced and with less emphasis on music, this doubtless to give its story
(which could have bordered on the tasteful in less expert hands) more of an
appropriate sense of dignity. Although very much of an American story, it is the
last of the Durbins (apart from Siodmak's "Christmas Holiday") to retain a sense
of European sophistication, an aura underlined by Pasternak's use of all his old
Hungarian and German pals in bit parts, including a rather surprising appearance
by Alexander Granach. Not least of the film's areas of interest is that it is
probably the first Hollywood film to display a marked influence from "Citizen Kane".
Although both films were released almost simultaneously, the Welles film had been
going through review and preview stages for months, and had been easily accessible
for study. The whole opening sequence seems almost a parody of "Kane" style and
content, though if would surely have been a private joke at the time, largely
between Koster and Cameraman Mate. The sets too, or at least those for Laughton's
large, lonely mansion, are too similar to those where Kane and Susan Alexander
spent so many boring hours, for it to be mere coincidence. (Footnote: The Durbin
film was remade in 1964 as "I'd Rather be Rich" with Sandra Dee and Maurice Chevalier.
A statistically-minded regular at these series points out that the Arliss is exactly
our 400th different film!) W. K. Everson