CAPTURED (Warner Brothers, 1933) Directed by Roy Del Ruth; screenplay by Edward Chodorov from "Fellow Prisoners" by Sir Phillip Gibbs; Camera, Barney McGill; 92 mins.


Sir Phillip Gibbs' novels were old-fashioned when they were written, and to his basic material, Warners have added some old-fashioned qualities of their own. In the early thirties, they seemed rather fond of jingoistic World War One movies, some of them - like "Chances" - incorporating an almost "Beau Geste"-like quality into the writing and characterisation. "Captured" is such a movie, perhaps seeming even a little more old-fashioned today thanks to the many more realistic prisoner-of-war books and movies that grew out of World War Two.

And of course the basic underlying romantic triangle is now a bit more familiar too; a 1938 British movie, "Who Goes Next?", is close enough to be a remake, although it was based on a play which made no reference in its credits to the Gibbs original. In any case, old-fashioned or not, "Captured", apart from being an almost-never-shown movie, has a lot of interest. Although the sets and lighting are theatrical, they're stylish and often quite elaborate, and the big action sequences done with real vigor. Leslie Howard's obvious sincerity gives his stock role a good deal of dignity, and the supporting cast is extremely good although one or two players do allow themselves to get over-wrought at times. Arthur Hohl, so often superb in supporting roles in Warner films ("The Narrow Margin" and "Jimmy the Gent" especially) over-acts irritatingly here. And John Bleifer (still quite active) chews up the scenery with his then-standard psycho role; less than two years later he was trying to rape Polly Ann Young and huck up Bick Jones with an axe in "The Crimson Trail"!

Following our Halloween triple bill two weeks back, tonight's double-bill foray into World War One may draw some emotional input from its Armistice Day playdate, and in that perspective the old-school plotting may seem a little less strident.

Ten Minute Intermission

SUBMARINE PATROL (20th Century-Fox, 1938) Directed by John Ford; Producer, Darryl F. Zanuck; Associate Producer, Gene Markey; Scenario by Rian James, Darrell Ware and Jack Yellen from the novel "The Splinter Fleet" by Bruce Millholland; Camera, Arthur Miller; Music, Arthur Lange; 95 minutes.


Ford's two 1938 films for Fox (the other one was "Four Men and a Prayer" which we ran some seasons back) though both big productions, can now only be regarded as interesting marking-time pieces before his finest and most productive period began in 1939. They are also good examples of the kind of "job-of-work" productions that he liked (in his later years) to dismiss as mere studio assignments. While neither of these had exactly strong personal productions, they still showed far more care and pride in craftsmanship than would have been present if Ford really regarded them as casually as he professed. "Submarine Patrol" was and is better of the two, though hindered by a little too much of Ford's traditional naval cameraderie and slapstick, and by some rather too obvious studio "exteriors". Further, as in other films with non-contemporary settings, Ford is at pains to be accurate in terms of military detail and costume, and then partially dissipates it by letting his heroine look, talk, dress and wear her hair like a typical 1938 ingenue. Nevertheless, the old Ford comes to the fore on several occasions. The two major action sequences are well-staged (and helped out by a few stock shots from Ford's earlier "The Seas Beneath" and "The World Moves On") and at least one sequence - the sailors' thoughts, spoken aloud, as their boat leaves port - is a lovely, poignant episode in which Fordian sentiment - unrestrained, yet totally sincere - works beautifully. On TV this sequence was usually cut, and the film was at one time available only in a 75 minute TV-edited version. Fortunately, our print tonight is fully complete.

Program ends tonight at 11.07

William K. Everson