NOW AND FOREVER (Associated British Picture Corp.-Pathe, 1954) Produced and Directed by Mario Zampi. Camera, Erwin Hillier; photographed in Technicolor; Screenplay by Stanley Black. A.R.P. Delderfield and Michael Pertwee; Music by Stanley Black; 90 mins.


I will apologize in advance for adopting a more personal tone with these notes than is usual (or normally advisable), but sometimes a personal involvement or association with a particular movie is the only real explanation of one's enthusiasm for it, and this, I think, is a case in point. I remember sitting in an Allied Artists' screening room in 1954 and not really looking for their film, but I thought Pathe's (now the U.K. Photographic) British films) and being initially delighted by this utterly charming film. Delight however soon turned to dismay at the lack of enthusiasm it stirred among the AA executives, almost none of whom stayed till the end, and one of whom remarked that it was high time that Jan Grippo (producer of the Bowery Boys series) was sent over to England to show them how to make movies! Needless to say, it got a resolute thumbs down and was never heard of again in this country in terms of any kind of theatrical release. (Allied didn't really want the British films anyway, and only took them because they were contractually obligated to do so, since Pathe released their films in Britain. Pathe was always a very conservative and even Victorian company, although for a long while there was a definite market for their kind of film in England. Even for 1954, "Now and Forever" was obviously a very old-fashioned movie, too evenly (and unconvincingly) divided into blacks and whites. Even so, with a little thought and imagination, it could have been a film which would have had some contemporary interest. Today of course, it's too late, its morals and attitudes (unfortunately) so hopelessly outdated that it would be laughed off a commercial screen - although, who knows, its sincerity and charm might save it with the right audiences. In any case, seen today, a quarter of a century after its production, it's a visitor from another world, a shattering and rather sad reminder of how values, moral and otherwise, have changed in the last two decades. In some ways, it is a companion piece for Pathe's "Family Way" (1966) - both could complement each other rather well, not only for their story content, but in showing the changes that had come over the movies' treatment of love and sex. Of course, "The Family Way" now seems rather archaic too, and I suppose one would have to take one of the "Emmanuelle" films to complete a triple-bill that would illustrate the new "sophistication" that has come to movies about love and marriage.

To return to a personal note, after that black day at Allied Artists, I spent some 15 years trying desperately to acquire a print, not only for my own satisfaction, but to share the film with others. The opportunity didn't come until 1970, by which time the film had been sold for (though rarely shown in) a television package. The U.S. tv prints were in Eastmancolor rather than the original Technicolor, but they were still stunningly beautiful prints. At the time however, it was impossible to get legal clearance to play the film at the New School - and the life-span of unstable Eastmancolor is unreliable and often short. All that could be done to protect the film was done, as for example storing it away from metal cans and plastic reels rather than metal ones, since metal changes the chemical reactions of celluloid, and Eastmancolor is only partially protected; and how rights can be protected so zealously on films which really have no commercial value at all, and in some cases can only be helped by a little exposure -- and by now, if not the worst, then at least the expected has happened. The print, which was still in good shape until a year ago, has suddenly begun to lose its color. At least it has not gone to a violent red, the usual fate of prints stored on metal reels. Usually it was reduced to an overall sepia tone, with the lakes and rivers remaining to tantalise us with the reminder that this once was a color film. I realise that to an audience which hasn't exactly been breathlessly waiting for what is after all a relatively unknown and unimportant film, this is hardly a crisis and I may be making too much of it, even though it is rather like watching one's own child shrivel up and fade away. But color is, or was, extremely important to this film. Apart from being a means of pacing the English countryside, its background of Springtime was essential to the story of young love. Now, thanks to the miracle of modern technology, Spring has been turned into autumn. The trees have changed from green to dead brown; green fields look like rain-parched deserts. Future historians (or even some of the pretentious current ones) might well look at this print and decide that Mario zampi was using color stylistically, to symbolise the antagonistic destiny of an autumnal gnom that threatens and threatens youth in contemporary England! Is one of "Now and Forever" is not really an important film (and nobody should make that judgement, for it has a bad habit of changing values, and of becoming useful and reflective in ways undeserved of at the time on its production), then one must realise that there are other films which are important and where true color is critical (Ray's "Rebel Without a Cause" for example) and the same thing is happening to those films.

Getting back to its value as a film, "Now And Forever" is a little slow and stoody
in its first third, but then takes off with much more warmth and humor, and spends most of its time in the heart of the English countryside. Occasionally they gild the lily a little, juxtaposing famous beauty spots into (apparently) a single location. For example, Bourton-on-the-Water, one of the loveliest villages in the Cotswolds, lends itself to being just a part of the little town in which the heroine lives. England is beautiful, and its charm lies in its naturalness and lack of perfection, and it is not quite as stunning in every direction as this film seems to imply.

The whole film has a pleasingly naive fairy-tale quality, closely akin to such Deanna Durbin co-features as "First Love" - which is why it seemed such a felicitous wonderfully together at the New School, and it's a pity that they never had the chance to make a film together! One of the compositions - Janette Scott is opening a flower-surrounded window for example - literally recalled a lily image in the old Melies film "The Flower Fairy." Janette Scott, making a graceful transition from child roles to adult ones, gives a most sensitive and moving performance and - even though one can occasionally sense that she is being directed - it is probably still the best thing that she has ever done. The shift from schoolgirl to near-maturity is achieved very effectively, over and above such obvious devices as getting rid of pigtales and switching to lower-key lighting. It's a pity that so many subsequent films, primarily comedies ("Double Dutch," "School for Soundrels") and later horror films ("Day of the Dead," "Creatures the World"") were content to use her youth and beauty, instead of carefully developing her as a dramatic star as well, as it had been done with Pamela Roome in the 40's. Scott seemed on the threshold of major stardom in Britain at one point, and was certainly by far the most publicized of the newer players, but unfortunately she was tied to a contract at that critical stage in her career, and their unimaginative formulas probably killed both the films they made and in the stars they developed. It is not impossible that she might have been a notable career. As far as I know, she is no longer currently active as an actress; married to Neil Newome for a while and living in Hollywood, she is now divorced and back in England, where her mother - Thora Hird - is still a much-in-demand character actress.

Throughout, "Now and Forever" is a thoroughly pleasant film; one can't really believe in the near satanic evil of Sonia Dressell or the casual bitchiness of Pamela Brown, but it doesn't matter. There's more conviction in the many cameos, especially Wilfrid Lawson's frighteningly accurate study of an inn-keeper, greedy, lecherous and harmless lazy, Bryan Forbes, who subsequently went on to a career as director, studio head and author, has an interesting unbilled bit as an obnoxious drunk at a dance. The art direction has a few holes in it - the very compact, London semi-detached-house stairway obviously doesn't belong in the spacious mansion where it has been placed - but since the whole film is such a fable, it hardly matters. As a whole, the film is a pleasing breath of fresh air and unsophistication - even though the deteriorating color has given it a more sombre look than was intended.

Ten Minute Intermission

DISRAELI (Warner Brothers, 1929) Directed by Alfred E. Green; Screenplay by Margaret S. Johnson from the play by Louis Napoleon Parker; Camera, Lee Garmes; 90 m.
With George Arliss, Joan Bennett, Florence Arliss, Anthony Bushell, David Torrence, Ivan Simpson, Doris Lloyd, Gwendolyn Logan, Charles Evans, Cosmo Kyrie Bellew, Jack Deerey, Michael Visaroff, Norman Cannon, Henry Carville, Fleagle Gardner, Powell York, Margaret Mann.

It's not surprising that George Arliss should choose "Disraeli" with which to make both his talkie debut and his initial bow under his Warner contract. He made it as a silent (in 1921) and it had also been one of his most successful stage roles. He obviously knew the character, and put the play inside and out, and its pre-written structure and dialogue form the major asset in those early days of sound, when the art of original screenplay writing had to be totally reshaped. His choice paid off: not only did the narrative lend itself to a silent version being issued as well, for the theatres not yet wired for sound, but Arliss' tremendous theatrical bravura and expertise won him the Academy Award. The film itself was one of the biggest hits of 1929, quite eclipsing such films as "Hallelujah," "Applause" and "Bulldog Drummond" which were everything he aimed for and more innovative. But "Disraeli" is more the Arliss films, undoubtedly superior and more inventive. But "Disraeli" is more the Arliss films, undoubtedly superior and more inventive. But "Disraeli" is more the Arliss films, undoubtedly superior and more inventive. But "Disraeli"

William K. Everson

SPRING SCHEDULES AVAILABLE NEXT WEEK. PROGRAM ENDS TONIGHT APPROX. 10.50