
Tonight's program is something of a literary rediscovery (if not a literary tour-de-force) since both films have been held out of circulation for many years due to their unprofitable story rights from their distinguished authors, Michael Arlen and Louis Bromfield respectively. Neither author really had to strain himself, but their expertise makes itself felt. "The Golden Arrow" is good lightweight fare for these bitterly cold days, its sunny Florida locales, luxury living and bright art-deco sets by Anton Grot making it a very comfortable film to relax with. It starts out with some exceptionally pungent dialogue, then seems to relax a bit and to settle for being Warners' own copy - with a few differences - of "It Happened One Night," a comedic source that other studios had been pillaging quite steadily for two years. Although it's a rather trivial film to follow up Davis' "Dangerous" and "The Petrified Forest," and she isn't always too becomingly gowned, she gets into the spirit of it all rather nicely, never making more of the dramatic than the mood requires. There's a snappy musical score, making good use of melodies from old Berkeley and Jolson musicals, and the only cause for complaint are the sad wasting of Paul Graetz (a fine European actor, and the star of the Warner-British "Mr. Cohen Takes a Walk" only the year before) in a five-second bit.

Ten Minute Intermission

IT ALL CAME TRUE (Warner Brothers-First National) Directed by Lewis Seiler; Executive Producer, Hal B. Wallis; Associate Producer, Mark Hellinger; Screenplay by Michael Fessier and Lawrence Kimble from the novellette "And It All Came True" by Louis Bromfield; Camera, Ernest Haller; 97 minutes With Ann Sheridan, Humphrey Bogart, Jeffrey Lynn, Zasu Pitts, Charles B. Fitzsimons, Jessie Busley, John Litel, John Hall, Melvyn Dressart, Charles Judels, Brandon Tynan, Howard Hickman, Herbert Vigran, Edward Gargan, Richard Neill.

"It All Came True" is the story that Warners bought from Bromfield for $50,000 purely as a vehicle with which to launch Ann Sheridan, finally, into full-fledged stardom. From that standpoint, the investment paid off; Sheridan comes through not only as a good dramatic actress but also as a fine comedienne, with that expert and seemingly effortless sense of dialogue timing that was, and is, one of Jane Fonda's major assets too. And although she decried her singing ability, she knows how to "sell" a song well even if her vocal range is limited. Furthermore, she has a unique blend of beauty, sensuality and warmth which was quite mishandled by Warners in their sexy "Gomph Girl" publicity, though fortunately not mishandled in the roles that they gave her. Never unappreciated, but quite possibly under-rated, Ann Sheridan added immeasurably to the success of films like "Torrid Zone" and "They Drive By Night", and it's good to have back in circulation this one real showcase film. Although it works in its own way, it's a curious property via which to sell a star, since it seems to contain so many elements of popular appeal. At the very least, both its period - and its mood - are ill-defined, though Warners expected audiences to have read the story and not to need any back-up information. At times it comes close to the Damon Runyon manner, perhaps it is its very lack of an orthodox format that gives it its peculiar warmth and charm, allowing it to be dramatic and funny in turn without any obvious changing of gears. Bogart too, still only on the threshold of major stardom and still essentially Warners' resident heavy, has a chance to show a comic sense and to kid his own image, without in any way lessening the dramatic force of his portrayal. It's a very curious, yet somehow very satisfying film, something like Howard Hawks' "Ball of Fire" in reverse, and one wonders what it might have been like with a different director, Raoul Walsh especially. Lewis Seiler had always been a good, reliable director of melodrama, but he doesn't have much subtlety in staging, and somehow makes it all look like a filmed play. It doesn't get outdoors much, and doesn't really need to. When it does, one recognises some of the old familiar Warner territory - including the side alley and iron stairway forever associated with "42nd Street!"

Our showing of "Old Bones of the River" in our last "Archive Night" was perhaps our first real disaster in years - though some were glad of the chance to see it, some enjoyed it -- and I think all enjoyed the accompanying Keaton film sufficiently for there to be ample compensation. But at least the dubious quality of the film stresses the Protective/Warning framework intended by the "Archive Night" slot. Many films really are too life before the "Old Bones" unappreciably cropped, despite a resurrection in the last real. However, it was an interesting experiment - and if nothing else you are part of movie history in having been present at the film's first and probably last public showing in the U.S.!