In the past, we've paid considerable attention to the work of British writer-director Sidney Gilliat, both on his own and as part of a notable team with another writer-director, Frank Launder. Of the two, Gilliat is certainly the more distinctive film-maker, and the wittier writer. But Launder's work, usually done with broader strokes and an eye more resolutely on the boxoffice, has been extremely interesting too, and tonight's two films provide a good cross-section of his work. His other films include such delightful films as "I See A Dark Stranger" ("The Adventurers") and the two best of the Carry On comedy vehicles, "The Happiest Days of Your Life" and "Polly To Be Wise".

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Two Thousand Women (Gainsborough-General Film Distributors, 1944)
Written and directed by Frank Launder, with additional dialogue by Michael Pertwee;
Camera, Jack Cox; produced by Edward Black; Music, Hans May; 97 mins.

"Two Thousand Women" was Launder's first film as a solo director, made right after he and Gilliat had done their first co-directed feature together ("Millions Like Us"), which we showed a season or two back. With the exception of Margaret Lockwood, all of the Gainsborough ladies were put into this enjoyable war film which, like Errol Flynn's "Desperate Journey", made its propagandist points but was never meant to be taken too seriously. Some of the British stiff upper-lippery in the face of (far from extreme) Nazi bestiality, and especially a few great lines from Flora Robson, betray the unwitting British arrogance which probably won the war quite as much as fire power. Patricia Roc, likely in her first film following "Millions Like Us" (which has receded several years in mind), is now given the full Hollywood glamour treatment and, particularly well photographed by Jack Cox, who, in "Millions Like Us", had been forced to downplay such lush photography to keep in line with that film's semi-documentary aims. She is most appealing, and certainly shows why she was soon to become one of Britain's most popular new stars. And (age-wise) at the other end of the scale, there's an interesting appearance by Janet Scott (star of last year's "Now and Forever") who'll just be a toddler in the arms of her actress-mother (Thora Hird) valiantly singing "There'll Always Be an England"!

The original writing, by the way, called for the p.o.w. nun (Roc) to perform a striptease during the camp concert to distract the German attention and cover an escape; censorship, and concern for the star image, ultimately caused this to be much more of a crowd scene.

The film had no major U.S. release, but was ultimately picked up by a NY independent distributor, heavily cut, sent into theatres like 8th Avenue's Cameo, and retitled "House of a Thousand Women" — a surprising understatement that shortchanged the British by a thousand pounds, but did of course manage to suggest something rather different and less decorous, but more in keeping with the 8th Avenue market.

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Ten Minute Intermission ---

Lady Godiva Rides Again (London Films, 1951)
A Launder-Gilliat Production, directed by Frank Launder; Original screenplay by Launder and Val Valentine;
Camera, Wilkie Cooper; Assistant Camera, William Alwyn; 90 mins.

By the early 1950's, initiatives by Rank to Korda's Long Films, which had enticed away such former Rank stalwarts as Launder and Gilliat, Powell and Pressburger, Noel and David Lean. "Lady Godiva Rides Again" is an example of a strange mixture of satire, Cinderella romance and exposé that doesn't really come off as a unified whole. Nevertheless, it covers a lot of territory — and of stylistic moods; at times it has simple charm, at others real poignancy. There are some fine performances, and it is often very funny, with its satiric jibes at the film industry coming off best. Its U.S. exposure was very slight; it was cut drastically, and still virtually disappeared until its sale to TV many years later. Our version is of the full original,斯坦-达林 (which also applies to "2000 Women"). One of the sequences cut over here was Alastair Sim's funny yet sad appearance as a film producer in the midst of a perennial British film crisis. Almost 30 years later, this still unfortunately is a very modern sequence! Although not an official remake, "AL Guest's 1964 "The Beauty Jungle" (US title, "Contest Girl") used a lot of Alastair Sim's material and expanded the framework. In the part played by Pauline Stroud, returned to almost immediate obsolescence, while beauty-contest winner Joan Collins, seen briefly in the contest scenes, went on to do rather well for herself.

Program ends approx. 10.52

Wm. K. Eversman