CARAVAN (Gainsborough-Rank, 1946) Directed by Arthur Crabtree; Produced by Harold Ruth; Screenplay by Edward Furlong from a novel by Lady Eleanor Smith; Camera, Stephen Dade; Location photography, Cyril Knowles; Music, Walter Rydin; Art Director, John Bacon; 100 mins.; released in the U.S. by Eagle-Lion in 1947, cut to 60 mins.; our print is of the original complete version.


By this time, the costume cycle was well under way, and, via such films as "The Wicked Lady," we progressed through "Three Weeks," did a little bit of Fun, and then to the spectrum from "Fanny By Gaslight," "Caravan," and "MGM's." This trend also included an approach to the near-burlesque level of the Tod Slaughter melodramas. Much of its fun is centred in the villains, with Dennis Price (an excellent, restrained actor here having the time of his life and pulling out all the stops) and dancer Robert Helpmann teamed to make a bizarre but tremendously effective British Greenstreet/Lorre teaming. The plot throws in just about everything in terms of stock situations and characters, and even turns itself into a Western on occasion. The artificiality of many of the sets, and the fairly obvious back projection, don't add much to the conviction - but realism is hardly a strongpoint in a film like this, though it does benefit from far more location shooting than of its ilk. Gainsborough were at this point copying the route followed by MGM, circa 1938, when they tried to toughen up the image of their romantic star Robert Taylor by giving him fight and action scenes. British lesser expertise in the action department doesn't entirely pull it off for Granger, but he tries. Anne Crawford, who died tragically young, is an appealing heroine, and Jean Kent - seen as the star of "Tottie True" a few weeks back - is seen in both films tonight in the kind of roles that so typed her that ultimate stardom of the first magnitude eluded her. However, a compensating factor in this film is that supporting player (and double for Stewart Granger) Russel Rouse, weeded and married her during the course of the film. Note also the direction Arthur Crabtree, who was the cameraman on "Fanny By Gaslight." The print is brand new, seemingly never run before.

Program ends approx. 11:08

Wm. E. Faversham