Ealing Studios had existed since 1931, but throughout most of the 30's had little real identity of its own. It produced under the banner of Associated Talking Pictures, but it was a small company and a somewhat primitive one. Some of the best films made there bore little relation to an "Ealing" tradition, and the studio was also rented out to independent producers. However, even from the beginning, there was a stress on comedy - via the Gracie Fields and George Formby comedies - and on films dealing with working class people and problems. One can certainly find roots for the later Ealing films in this early period. Ealing proper began in 1939; however, when Michael Balcon took over, surrounded himself by a largely new group of writers and directors, experimented, expanded, and by 1946 had established a style of production which could be recognized as an "Ealing" style. Tonight's two comedies, one broad and one sophisticated, are from 1939, the first year of the "real" Ealing, and are respectively the fourth and seventh in the studio's ten films for that year. Actually it was production number eight, "Cheer Boys Cheer", that came closest to being a forerunner of the Ealing comedies of the 50's.

TROUBLE BREWING (Capad-Ealing, 1939) Directed by Anthony Kimmins; produced by Jack Kitching; Camera: Ronald Neame; Script by Kimmins, Angus MaPhail and Michael Hogan; songs and lyrics by George Formby, Harry Gifford and Fred E. Clarke; Art Director, Wilfred Shingleton; Musical Director, Ernest Irving; 87 minutes.
With: George Formby (George); Google Withers (Mary); Gus McLauchlan (Bill Fiske); Garry Marsh (A.J. Brady); G.Denker Warren (Major Brown); Beatrice Faeth-McKay (housekeeper); Jess Ambler (Lord Redhill); Martin Hunt (Reverend Rod); Ronald Shiner (Bridgewater); Basil Radford (guest); Emma Cannon (maid).

The Formby comedies were the Ealing comedies to change least under the new regime; they had always been enormously popular, and had thus been a constant source of increased budgets. But the last one before Balcon's assumption of command, 1939's "It's in the Air", set new standards in size and production care. "Trouble Brewing" wisely doesn't try to upset the formula by expanding it to an even greater degree, but the film does benefit from the production polish which had been extended to all of the 1939 Ealings. Its art direction, sets and camerawork are all of a high order, and care seems to have been taken to avoid cruder slapstick and to integrate the sight gag material into the story. While it's not the best formby (arguably, "Turned Out Nice Again") or the most typical ("No Limit" perhaps), it's certainly one of the glossiest and thus a good introduction to Formby to those who don't already know him. Apparently only two of the Formby's ("Iset George Do It" and "It's in the Air") were ever released in the U.S. theatrically, and those because of their topical war-oriented themes. It's too hard to understand why, since Formby was a Northern dialect comedian whose patter was sometimes hard to follow, and his double-entendre songs full of Music Hall connotations and occasional blue gags which the censors might well have taken out had they understood them. On the other hand, the Russians, for reasons never fully explained, loved Formby comedies and he was one of their top money-making stars. The Germans liked him too, dubbed into German (but with the songs staying as they were) and of course in England he was enormously popular - for years the biggest British moneymaker, and also very high in boxoffice polls that included the top Hollywood names. But he wasn't jealous about others getting laughs. Martin Hunt, Britain's own "Pappy DeMunck, gets the funniest single line in "Trouble Brewing". It's a relatively long speech, but he never got a better one.

Most of the top British comedians drew a great deal from Music Hall traditions and material, but they also kept striking parallels with American comedians. Will Hay had elements of both W.C. Fields and Buster Keaton, while Jack Hulbert was much like Harold Lloyd in both style and Fields and Buster Keaton, while Jack Hulbert was much like Harold Lloyd in both style and material. Formby was closest in spirit to Harry Langdon, although in "Trouble Brewing" he's a format. Formby was closest in spirit to Harry Langdon, although in "Trouble Brewing" he was a little less of a boob than usual. Appreciating his comedy depends to a degree on familiarity with it, but whether one finds his material funny or not, he himself is a most likeable and ingratiating fellow. And while he preferred to work solo (unlike Will Hay and Jack Hulbert, he never teamed with other comedians, though he occasionally used a straight man as he did with Gus McLauchlan) he wasn't jealous about others getting laughs. Martin Hunt, Britain's own "Pappy DeMunck, gets the funniest single line in "Trouble Brewing". It's a relatively long speech, but he never got a better one.

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by Bosley Crowther condemned it to instant obscurity, and called it "a heavy dish of Yorkshire pudding." Even if one goes along with the critical habit of comparing movies to food, the selection here is somewhat inapt, as "Young Man's Fancy" far more resembles a soufflé: somewhat unexpectedly flavored with horse-radish. Either way, for Ealing it's a rare dish indeed: most of their few social comedies, and "Kind Hearts and Coronets" included, are the best of the examples, tended to be sardonic—whereas for all of its gaiety, this one has a kind of sour sadness mixed in to it. It's an unusually elegant script that included unusually elegant treatment—rather like an Oscar Wilde story transposed to murkier screen by Max Ophuls. But story and direction are both the work of the Robert Stevenson, whose work we have often espoused in the past in the work of Ealing. "King Solomon's Mines" to "The Ware Case," "The Man Who Changed His Mind," "The Winslow Boy," etc. Until now, "King Solomon's Mines," "The Ware Case," "The Man Who Changed His Mind," "The Winslow Boy," "The Kobe Express," etc. Stevenson has played in the "Kob New York," and "Return to Yesterday" are among the Stevenson films we've played in the "Kob New York," and "Return to Yesterday" are among the Stevenson films we've played in the "Kob New York," and "Return to Yesterday" are among the Stevenson films we've played in the "Kob New York," and "Return to Yesterday" are among the Stevenson films we've played in the "Kob New York," and "Return to Yesterday" are among the Stevenson films we've played in the "Kob New York," and "Return to Yesterday" are among the Stevenson films we've played in the "Kob New York," and "Return to Yesterday" are among the Stevenson films we've played in the "Kob New York," and "Return to Yesterday" are among the Stevenson films we've played in the "Kob New 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It's a romance—yet hardly a love story. It's a comedy of manners, but one productive of chuckles rather than many laughs. Its major values are perhaps the less obvious ones: a likable script, an extremely good cast bolstering such revered music hall and stage names as Billy Bennett and Sennour Hicks, along with the French player Adolphe Menjou in a curious bit, charming performances by Jones and Anna Lee, and above all, production qualities which, via art direction and camerawork, lovingly recreate a real sense of period, particularly of the music halls of England and France of the 1870s. It's an unusually elegant film, though in the cast coming along one month after its domestic release (shutting down all British cinemas for the war a short period, and eliminating most of the European market) it just got lost in the shuffle. Stevenson's follow-up, although it made a little more money via a resale of films some years later, was no contest, and had the presence of Gilve, a very different way. Stevenson's earlier "The Mare Case" did it just as well, and so did Launder and Gilliat's "Millions Like Us." But there were some few others. The sheer romanticism of "Young Man's Fancy" was to slip away from Stevenson and revitalized in his initial Hollywood films and especially in the films of "Back Street" and "Jane Eyre." The "The Mare Case" of "Young Man's Fancy," which would be replaced by the passive Ralph Michael -- and the romantic spirit of Anna Lee supplanted by the resignation of Googie Whithers in "It Always Rains on Sunday," accepting second-bests and compromise and considering that, in its fashion, to be a "happy ending." Somehow the more I write about "Young Man's Fancy," the more it begins to sound, I had no wish to do that or to set up obstacles for it, so I will cease and desist abruptly, and leave the film to its own devices. — William K. Everson — Program ends approx. 10:50, followed by brief discussion session.