A REMINDER that next week's program is preceded by a jazz concert. So auditoria doors will not open until approx. 7:20. The (silent) program is a short one, a way we could extend an excellent Harold Lloyd two-reeler, NUMBER PLEASE?, to provide a toruous finale. Tonight is the second of my two "away" assignments (last week, Italy, tonight Wyoming) but I'll be back next week for a question and discussion period to wrap up this series.

SPARE A COPPER (ASP-Baling), 1940) Directed by John Paddy Carstairs; Produced by Michael Balcon; Ass. Producer, Basil Dearden; Story by Dearden, Austin Mefford, Roger MacDougall; Camera, Bryan Langley; Special Effects by Roy Kelline and Douglas Woolsey; Music, Louis Levy; 77 mins.


Made at the very height of Formby's career, when his pictures had really good production values and were big box office. "Spare a Copper" (a particularly neat pun title incidentally) was a huge commercial success (released over the summer months double-billed with westerns) but a critical failure. The reviewers, who normally liked Formby, were especially harsh on this one, pointing out that it was merely Formby going through all of his old bag of tricks again. At the time, it was one of his very best, the public disagreed, and it didn't duplicate the success of "Spare a Copper". However, for once the critics were right on both films. Hitchcock, in "Sabotage", can get away with a film that is largely a rehash of earlier works; a limited comedian like Formby doesn't find it so easy. "Spare a Copper" is constantly on the move, filled with lively slapstick chases and knockabout, and some typical and pleasing songs. But it does lack inspiration and for every routine that Formby goes through, one can recall a duplicate done better, and earlier. However, in this country where the bulk of Formby's work is not so well known, this liability hardly exists, and in any case the film is so far out of its own way than The Crazy Gang's "Gang-Bage", similar wartime knockabout, that came out a few weeks earlier. (There was no Will Hay comedy in 1941 when he joined Columbia). Not the least of the film's delights are a typically illlogical newspaper headline announcing SECRET LAUNCHING TODAY!, and the charm and grace of leading lady Dorothy Hysen, although she is not always well served here by some unflattering lighting.

— Ten Minute Intermission —

LONDON BELONGS TO ME (A Frank Lauder-Sydney Gilliatt-Individual Picture, for General Film Distributors' release, 1948) US release by Universal under the title "The Dalek Street". Directed by Sidney Gilliatt; Screenplay by Gilliatt and F.R. Williams, from the novel by Norman Collins; Camera, Wilkie Cooper; Music by Benjamin Frankel; 112 mins.


"London Belongs to Me" isn't so much a lost film so much as one deliberately swept under the carpet and forgotten. It was a commercial failure at the time, and a number of reasons, 1948 was a banner year for British prestige films ("Oliver Twist", "Hamlet", "The Red Shoes", "The Fallen Idol", "Blanche Fury", "The Winslow Boy", etc.) and films that didn't measure up to that plateau were considered as such. Too many of the Alastair Sim-Sydney Gilliatt team suggested light comedy, the manner of their earlier "Green for Danger", and while "London..." does have rich comic elements, it is often sad and rather wry comedy. Essential is it is film noir, very much akin to "It Always Rains on Sunday" but rather more remote in that it is set in 1939, and as such was not as much appreciated for it own unique mood as it may be today. And on top of that, it did have flaws; Gilliatt himself was disappointed in the film and honest enough to admit that his own screenplay was at fault. Sticking too closely to the rambling original novel and work too many of its incidents and characters, So it can be considered a misfire, and perhaps a long and rather disjointed one, but is so full of interesting players and characters that it is always interesting, often very funny and occasionally quite touching — although the latter element would be more apparent were not Richard Attenborough giving his (then) rather standard performance. Dirk Bogarde perhaps, though then new and unexperienced, might have been a more stimulating choice. The ending, while appropriate and subtly achieved, is also more meaningful to those who lived through the immediate pre-war period in Britain, and its impact will be less over here. Although the print carries the American release title, it is actually a Canadian print and in any case fully complete, since even in the US it was used.

William K. Everson

Program ends approx. 10:50.