

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

Film Reviews
By G.M.



GOLDEN BOY (Columbia)

Whichever way you look at it, "Golden Boy" is a worth-while picture. I say "whichever way you look at it" because, if you like boxing, there are several stirring bouts; if you like music, then you will hear such lovely things as "Meditation" from "Thais" and a Brahms "Cradle Song." If you are interested in acting, you will find that William Holden is one person who justifies the Hollywood-abused adjective of dynamic. You will also find Barbara Stanwyck in what may well be her best performance, Adolphe Menjou and Joseph Calleia adequate in their roles, and an actor named Lee J. Cobb who plays superbly an Italian father. And furthermore, if you are one of the few who still believe that pictures can have ideas, take note that this picture is from

the play by Clifford Odets, whose previous claims to fame were that he wrote "Waiting for Lefty" and "Till the Day I Die," and married Luise Rainer.

These are the things which make "Golden Boy" worth seeing. In giving some idea of the picture, it is as well to mention the strange mixture it is. If you went to a wrestling match and they played the "Midsummer Night's Dream" Overture before the bout, or if you went to a Menuhin concert and a feather-weight boxing match were staged as a curtain-raiser, you would be, to say the least, surprised. Yet, in "Golden Boy," the fact that at one moment William Holden is pummeling his way round a canvas square and, a short time after, playing Brahms on the violin, does not seem so extraordinary. Perhaps that is because Clifford Odets is the dramatist. I suspect that the film lacks some-

thing that the play possessed, but there is still enough to make it stand right out from the usual Hollywood factory-made drama.

In this play, Odets has told the old story of heart against head in New York. The beautiful hands of Joe Bonaparte (William Holden) are adept at two things—playing the violin or punching a face. At either trade they can make money; but Joe's personal preference seems to be for playing rather than punching until circumstances and a fight-promoter named Tom Moody (Menjou) set him well on the way to becoming a boxing champion. When Joe's fingers begin to itch for the feel of violin strings again, a heroine is introduced to persuade him that boxing is the better game; but after Joe has accidentally killed a negro in a fight, and broken his precious hand into the bargain, culture apparently wins the match. A man cannot be a boxing champion with a broken hand, but he may still be a great musician; and it is a consolation to Joe as well as the audience when the heroine applauds his decision to stick to music.

It is hard to give acting honours to any one person in the picture. They must be shared between William Holden, Lee J. Cobb and Barbara Stanwyck. And, of course, much credit also to Rouben Mamoulian, who directed it.

and his son and daughter play polo and go to bottle parties, apparently oblivious of father. So the disconsolate magnate (in the Pump business) wanders down to Central Park to watch the buds bursting on the trees. This he has been solemnly advised to do by his perfect butler (Franklin Pangborn), as relaxation for the mind. In the park, while idly watching seals, the lonesome Mr. Borden gets into conversation with a charming blonde named Mary Grey (Ginger Rogers). The upshot is that they go to the Flamingo Club (very expensive), and Have Wonderful Time with bottles of champagne, arriving at the Borden mansion at one of the very small hours. Next day, Mr. Borden having found in Miss Grey the perfect antidote for his loneliness, he engages her to be his little playmate, so to speak. The family of Borden, filled with wrath and indignation, sits up, takes notice, and the fun begins.

With three members of the Borden menage finding her presence unwelcome, Mary has a hard time keeping her philanthropy for oppressed Papa Borden functioning. Function it does, however, and she aids and abets him in a wild round of revelry which no gentleman of his years can indulge in with impunity to his liver. Papa begins to feel the strain; meantime, Mrs. Borden, having discovered that she has a real, live-and-kicking husband of whom she is really fond, seeks to gain his affections once more by a bait of his favourite Beef Stew. This is, incidentally, successful. Daughter marries the class-conscious chauffeur, Mr. and Mrs. go into a sophisticated bill-and-coo, and son (who is not a bad sort of chap, even if he *does* play polo) discovers what a pretty girl Mary Grey is.

If you like an occasional bout of mild, sophisticated insanity, go and see "Fifth Avenue Girl." The acting is uniformly excellent. James Ellison, as the leftist chauffeur, does a splendid job with his fiery indictment of capitalists in a millionaire's kitchen. Franklin Pangborn is perfect as the butler who, after having received a black eye from the inebriated Mr. Borden, remarks "I do not mind the discoloration, sir," in a way that will make you squirm with joy. And Verree Teasdale, Ginger Rogers, Walter Connolly and the others all make this a really funny and delightful picture.

FIFTH AVENUE GIRL (RKO Radio)

Craziness comes back to the screen after a short vacation; but what suave, delightful craziness! Everyone in the cast plays his part with such delicious gravity that sometimes you have to pinch yourself to wake up and be sure that people don't really behave like that.

The whole merry muddle starts when Mr. Borden (Walter Connolly, in his part like a fish in water) discovers that he isn't getting any fun out of life. Mrs. Borden (Verree Teasdale) has long since ceased to be aware of his existence,

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November 17th, 1939.

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