



ORY FOR FEMINISM

Who Made "Phantom Lady"

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scripts were discarded or mutilated by Paramount, M-G-M, Columbia, and Warners. She was almost ready to give up the fight when an agent turned up with a mystery story about a disappearing alibi in a conspicuous hat. Would she write a script on that theme? If so, Universal might be persuaded to make a picture. Miss Harrison saw possibilities in the plot, but two years of free-lance work in Hollywood had made her very dubious about the treatment it would receive. So she told the high panjandrums of Universal exactly how the picture ought to be made. Few men, far less a woman, far less a woman as attractive as Joan Harrison, had ever talked to them like that. But if they were startled, they were also impressed. If the lady knew their business so much better than they knew it themselves, how would she like to produce the picture? Miss Harrison replied that nothing would please her more.

Unconventional Methods

From the first, Joan Harrison's working methods are reported to have been rather unconventional; they showed foresight and sharp common sense. *Phantom Lady* proves that report to be true. Realising that much of the success of this type of film depends on the right atmosphere created by the right settings, she made sure of a good art director (John Goodman) before she did anything else.

JOAN HARRISON, producer of "Phantom Lady," is seen in the photograph at the top of the page with Robert Siodmak, the director, on her left, and Franchot Tone, one of the stars, on her right.

Below: Ella Raines, the almost unknown actress, who gives a very skillful performance as heroine in the film.



Then she chose a good script-writer (B. C. Schoenfeld), worked in close collaboration with him, and, like Hitchcock, gave him full screen credit. She also collaborated closely with the director (Robert Siodmak), and with the chief cameraman (Elwood Bredell). The result is to be seen in the picture, where lighting and camera angles are as important as anything else in imparting a mood of threatening eeriness—especially in the low-life sequence where the heroine masquerades as a swing-fiend in order to seduce the truth about the Hat from the bribed drummer.

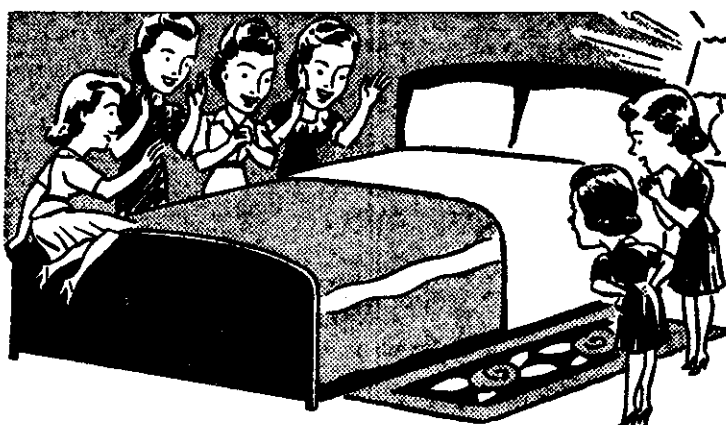
Having assembled her team of behind-the-scenes workers, Joan Harrison went on to choose her cast—the reverse of the usual Hollywood practice. For the heroine she chose the almost unknown Ella Raines, and talked her into wearing the simple dresses and hair-styles a secretary might reasonably be expected to wear. Thanks to Miss Harrison, but thanks also to her

own acting ability, Ella Raines is not likely to remain almost unknown much longer. Then Miss Harrison invested 60,000 dollars of her budget in Franchot Tone for the role of the maniac, on the theory that "unusual casting brings a different flavour to your picture." (It certainly does; and his performance brings a great deal of credit to Franchot Tone). Thomas Gomez as the detective is almost as unorthodox and successful.

She persuaded Allan Curtis to play without make-up, on the equally startling theory that a hero looks more heroic if he looks like a human being. She was also better aware than most people in Hollywood of the value of silence—a good half of *Phantom Lady* is made without the doubtful benefit of either talk or music. For instance, the swing sequence—which suggests a sexual orgy in music, portrayed symbolically, and is the highlight of the picture—proceeds without a line of dialogue.

Things to Come?

After she had finished *Phantom Lady*, producer Joan Harrison was offered the chance to make either a Western or an orthodox melodrama. She refused both. "I am a specialist," she said. "I am proud of being a specialist. I don't want to make pictures with the Andrews Sisters." Her own idea at the moment is to produce either "a film to be made entirely by women," or "a murder story involving only children." She may make neither, but whatever she does, it promises to be interesting.



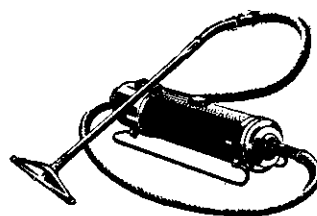
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